

1 NOVEMBER 2020 Sunday Message ALL SAINTS

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Let us all rejoice in the Lord,
as we celebrate the feast day in honour of all
the Saints,
at whose festival the Angels rejoice
and praise the Son of God.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
by whose gift we venerate in one celebration
the merits of all the Saints,
bestow on us, we pray,
through the prayers of so many intercessors,
an abundance of the reconciliation with you
for which we earnestly long...
Amen.

FIRST READING Apocalypse 7:2-4,9-14

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.
I, John, saw another angel rising where the
sun rises, carrying the seal of the living God;
he called in a powerful voice to the four
angels whose duty it was to devastate land
and sea, "Wait before you do any damage on
land or at sea or to the trees, until we have
put the seal on the foreheads of the servants
of our God." Then I heard how many were
sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand,
out of all the tribes of Israel.

After that I saw a huge number, impossible
to count, of people from every nation, race,
tribe and language; they were standing in
front of the throne and in front of the lamb,
dressed in white robes and holding palms in
their hands. They shouted aloud, "Victory to
our God, who sits on the throne, and to the
Lamb!" And all the angels who were standing
in a circle around the throne, surrounding
the elders and the four animals, prostrated
themselves before the throne, and touched
the ground with their foreheads, worshipping
God with these words: "Amen. Praise and
glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and
honour and power and strength to our God
for ever and ever. Amen."

One of the elders then spoke, and asked me,
"Do you know who these people are,
dressed in white robes, and where they have
come from?" I answered him, "You can tell
me, my Lord." Then he said, "These are the
people who have been through the great
persecution, and they have washed their
robes white again in the blood of the Lamb."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 23

Response:

Such are the men who seek your face, O Lord.

- The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters he made it firm. (R.)
- Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
who desires not worthless things. (R.)
- He shall receive blessings from the Lord
and reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the men who seek him,
seek the face of the God of Jacob. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 John 3:1-3

A reading from the first letter of St John.

Think of the love that the Father has lavished
on us,
by letting us be called God's children;
and that is what we are.
Because the world refused to acknowledge
him,
therefore it does not acknowledge us.
My dear people, we are already the children
of God
but what we are to be in the future has not yet
been revealed;
all we know is, that when it is revealed
we shall be like him
because we shall see him as he really is.
Surely everyone who entertains this hope
must purify himself, must try to be as pure
as Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Come to me, all you who labour and are
overburdened,
and I will give you rest, says the Lord.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill.
There he sat down and was joined by his
disciples. Then he began to speak. This is
what he taught them:

"How happy are the poor in spirit;
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Happy the gentle:
they shall have the earth for their heritage.
Happy those who mourn:
they shall be comforted.
Happy those who hunger and thirst for what
is right:
they shall be satisfied.
Happy the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them.
Happy the pure in heart:
they shall see God.
Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called sons of God.
Happy those who are persecuted in the
cause of right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Happy are you when people abuse you
and persecute you and speak all kinds of

calumny against you on my account. Rejoice
and be glad, for your reward will be great in
heaven."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May these offerings we bring in honour of all
the Saints

be pleasing to you, O Lord,
and grant that, just as we believe the Saints
to be already assured of immortality,
so we may experience their concern for our
salvation...
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall
see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the
sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we adore you, O God, who alone are holy
and wonderful in all your Saints,
we implore your grace,
so that, coming to perfect holiness in the
fullness of your love,
we may pass from this pilgrim table
to the banquet of our heavenly homeland...
Amen.

THE WORD

ME – A SAINT??

(MATTHEW 5:1-12)

Jesus goes up the mountain (which our text, unfortunately, translates as "the hill"): he sits down, which is the position of a rabbi when teaching; it is Jesus who gives the teaching, which is the basic meaning of "Torah", he does not receive it from elsewhere.

Jesus, then, is interpreting the Law as it could be applied by his disciples in their own time and situation: this was the purpose of the Pharisees, and later the rabbis, to adapt the Torah in such a way that its values could be lived out by those who followed their teaching. When Jesus declares that "my yoke is easy and my burden light", he is saying that his interpretation of the Law is less strict than that of other teachers. Matthew is thus presenting Jesus' teaching as the authoritative understanding of what the Law of God implies. ■

REFLECT

Today we celebrate the feast of All Saints. We are not thinking primarily of those Christians who have been canonised, that is, officially recognised by the Church as having lived a holy life and who are held up as examples to inspire us to try our best to live out our baptismal commitment. We are celebrating all those ordinary folk, members of our own families and others who lived out their faith quietly in the rough and tumble of everyday life. Very few of the canonised saints were married people with families.

There used to be a feeling that a holy life was one which could be lived only by people who consecrated their lives to God as priests, nuns, monks or other religious persons. However, the Second Vatican Council did away with this manner of thinking when it taught that everyone is called to holiness. The notion that lay people had to settle for a second-class way of life in the Church was seen to be false. No way of life is higher, better or holier than any other. The manner in which individual people live out their Christian commitment is the way in which they find holiness, which is essentially being close to God and practising the values of the Gospel in the situation in which they find themselves: for many people, this is marriage and family life; other states, such as the single life, are as valid in this regard. No one is excluded from being holy, and that includes you. In the Beatitudes, which form our Gospel reading today, the reward of the kingdom is not promised to those who work miracles, but to the kind of person who is described there. Jesus gives eight Beatitudes rather than Ten Commandments: but in a real sense, they are more demanding. ■

SAY

How happy are the poor
in spirit: theirs is the
kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5:3)

LEARN

In Matthew's version of the Gospel,
mountains are places of revelation.

The Sermon on the Mount presents Jesus in
the same light as Moses, who received the
Torah on Mount Sinai.

No state of life is better or holier than any
other: everyone is called to holiness.

DO

Make the sign of the cross with holy water.
Think of your baptismal promises: they are
your way to being holy.



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THE WORD

Year A • Psalter Week 4

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Let my prayer come into your presence.
Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God,
graciously keep from us all adversity,
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,
we may pursue in freedom of heart
the things that are yours.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Wisdom 6:12-16

A reading from the book of Wisdom.
Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.
By those who love her she is readily seen,
and found by those who look for her.
Quick to anticipate those who desire her, she
makes herself known to them.
Watch for her early and you will have no
trouble;
you will find her sitting at your gates.
Even to think about her is understanding fully
grown;
be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly
leave you.
She herself walks about looking for those
who are worthy of her
and graciously shows herself to them as they
go,
in every thought of theirs coming to meet
them.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalms 62

Response:
For you my soul is thirsting, O God, my God.

- O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water. (R.)
- So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise. (R.)

- So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R.)
- On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadows of your wings I rejoice. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Thessalonians.

>We want you to be quite certain, brothers,
about those who have died, to make sure that
you do not grieve about them, like the other
people who have no hope. We believe that
Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be
the same for those who have died in Jesus:
God will bring them with him.< We can tell
you this from the Lord's own teaching, that
any of us who are left alive until the Lord's
coming will not have any advantage over
those who have died. At the trumpet of God,
the voice of the archangel will call out the
command and the Lord himself will come
down from heaven; those who have died in
Christ will be the first to rise, and then those
of us who are still alive will be taken up in
the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord
in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord for
ever. With such thoughts as these you should
comfort one another.

>The word of the Lord.<
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Stay awake and stand ready,
because you do not know the hour
when the Son of Man is coming.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 25:1-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: "The
kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten
bridesmaids took their lamps and went to
meet the bridegroom. Five of them were
foolish and five were sensible: the foolish
ones did take their lamps, but they brought
no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks
of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom
was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell
asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, 'The
bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him.'
At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and
trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones
said to the sensible ones, 'Give us some of
your oil: our lamps are going out.' But they
replied, 'There may not be enough for us and
for you; you had better go to those who sell it
and buy some for yourselves.' They had gone
off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived.
Those who were ready went in with him to
the wedding hall and the door was closed.
The other bridesmaids arrived later. 'Lord,
Lord,' they said 'open the door for us.' But
he replied, 'I tell you solemnly, I do not know
you.' So stay awake, because you do not
know either the day or the hour."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favour, we pray, O Lord,
upon the sacrificial gifts offered here,
that, celebrating in mystery the Passion of
your Son,
we may honour it with loving devotion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I
shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures where he
gives me repose,
near restful waters he leads me.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished by this sacred gift, O Lord,
we give you thanks and beseech your mercy,
that, by the pouring forth of your Spirit,
the grace of integrity may endure
in those your heavenly power has entered.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



We are approaching the end of the Church's liturgical year and the Sunday readings begin to think about the second coming of Christ. The parable in today's Gospel extract is one which is traditionally understood in this way.

The theme is that of the coming of the kingdom, which is presented as the arrival of the bridal couple from the house of the bride's father, and the beginning of the wedding feast. The wedding banquet is a frequent symbol for the kingdom of God. The moral is that of being prepared: one group of female attendants have intelligently planned for the possible need for more oil for their lamps; the others, described as "foolish", have clearly thought only in the short term; even when the bridegroom's arrival is delayed, they do not take the opportunity to remedy their situation, but simply doze off. On appealing to the better nature of their companions to share their resources, the others point out that if they do, there will be no lighted lamps at all. As a result, they are locked out of the celebrations.

The groom's reply may well indicate that the bridesmaids may be part of the bride's household, but unknown to him. So the reader is being warned to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man, and presented with models for people who are prepared and who are not. We are being urged not to take anything for granted, that it is our responsibility to be awake when the Lord arrives. ■

REFLECT

There are texts in the Bible which look to the second coming and the end of the world. The early writings of St Paul suggest that he and the earliest Christians thought that this was imminent. However, it became clear that this was not going to happen anytime soon, and that the disciples of Jesus had to get on with living their lives just like everybody else. There are certain Christian groups who see in natural disasters indications of the end of the world, but this is to misunderstand the nature of apocalyptic writing, such as the book of Revelation, and to interpret it literally.

The warnings in our Gospel extracts on these Sundays at the end of this cycle of readings is to shake us out of any possible state of complacency into which we may have fallen. This is due not to any ill will on our part, but rather because the rhythm of daily life, our worries and concerns about our family, work and so on, can lure us into thinking about what is going on at the present time and our awareness of God in our lives can become somewhat dulled. The scriptures may not be telling us that the end of the world is near: but perhaps they are reminding us that the Lord comes to us in all sorts of ways which we might not realise, because, as far as our spiritual awareness is concerned, we have dozed off. ■

SAY

Stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.
(Matthew 25:13)

DO

When your alarm goes off in the morning, think of the shout, "The bridegroom is coming!"



LEARN

The custom of the time was that the bridegroom would go to the bride's father's house to bring her to his own home.

Apocalyptic literature, such as the books of Daniel and Revelation, was written to encourage communities under persecution to stand firm, that the Lord would come to vindicate them.

In the Hebrew Bible, God was sometimes identified as the bridegroom of Israel: in Matthew's writing, the figure of the bridegroom applied to the Son of Man, who is Jesus.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.

You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you,

for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20,30-31

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

A perfect wife – who can find her? She is far beyond the price of pearls. Her husband's heart has confidence in her, from her he will derive no little profit. Advantage and not hurt she brings him all the days of her life. She is always busy with wool and with flax, she does her work with eager hands. She sets her hands to the distaff, her fingers grasp the spindle. She holds out her hand to the poor, she opens her arms to the needy. Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty; the woman who is wise is the one to praise. Give her a share in what her hands have worked for, and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 127

Response:

O blessed are those who fear the Lord.

- O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways! By the labour of your hands you shall eat. You will be happy and prosper. (R.)
- Your wife like a fruitful vine in the heart of your house; your children like shoots of the olive, around your table. (R.)

- Indeed thus shall be blessed the man who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion in a happy Jerusalem all the days of your life. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

You will not be expecting us to write anything to you, brothers, about "times and seasons", since you know well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, "How quiet and peaceful it is" that the worst suddenly happens, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman; and there will be no way for anybody to evade it.

But it is not as if you live in the dark, my brothers, for that Day to overtake you like a thief. No, you are all sons of light and sons of the day: we do not belong to the night or to the darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Even if you have to die, says the Lord, keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 25:14-30

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

>Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out.<

"The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

>"Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. 'Sir,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made.'

"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness.' < Next the man with two talents came forward. 'Sir,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness.' Last came forward the man who had one talent. 'Sir,' said he, 'I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest.

So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

>The Gospel of the Lord.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;

through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under

Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,

the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant, O Lord, we pray, that what we offer in the sight of your majesty may obtain for us the grace of being devoted to you and gain us the prize of everlasting happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We have partaken of the gifts of this sacred mystery, humbly imploring, O Lord, that what your Son commanded us to do in memory of him may bring us growth in charity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE WORD**BURIED TALENTS**

(MATTHEW 25:14-30)



Jesus continues his teaching on the coming of the kingdom of God with the parable of the landowner and the servants to whom he gives a portion of his resources and the judgement which ensues when he returns.

This is not a story urging self-improvement, but is another warning about the return of the Son of Man. This is indicated by the change in the way the main character is described. At the beginning, he is referred to simply as "a man": but the third servant buries "his master's" money. The term "master" is *Kyrios* in Matthew's original Greek text and can also be understood as "Lord", and is used for the rest of the narrative. Thus we can see that there is more to the message than meets the eye. The fate of the third servant is to be cast out of the household without a reference. He may be free of his tyrannical employer, but the chances of his finding another position at all, far less one at the level he previously enjoyed, are practically nil, hence the parable ends with a note about frustration, with "weeping and gnashing of teeth".

It is worth noting that the master does not dispute the third servant's description of him. However, once his sharp practices are set out in public, the usual social conventions have been breached and punishment is sure to follow. We should, therefore, be careful about allegorising, that is, seeing corresponding details in every aspect of the parable. ■

REFLECT

There are several possible themes running through this parable, most of which do not concern us today. The word "talent" refers, originally, to a considerable sum of money, but passed into English with the sense of innate ability, thanks to this story. The third servant may well be in the same position as someone who discovers that she or he is working for a boss or a firm whose working practices are fundamentally dishonest. We noticed that the central figure in the parable does not disagree with his servant's assessment of himself as

"a hard man", reaping and gathering from what was not his own. Did he commend the other two stewards, who doubled their amounts, for pursuing similar policies and exploiting other people? In that case, depositing the money in the bank would be the best way of avoiding such behaviour, but the third individual does not want to co operate in any way at all. If so, then he is perhaps not to be condemned as lazy or irresponsible, but rather commended for acting in an honourable way, according to his conscience.

LEARN

The word "talent" originally referred to a large sum of money.

It passed into English usage as meaning a special aptitude or gift, due to the influence of this parable.

"Throw him out into the dark" refers to condemnation at the last judgement.

DO

When you hear on the news or in conversation about a whistle-blower, remember the person in your prayers.

SAY

Do not put me to that kind of test.

We know that there are people who are caught in such a dilemma today. To take a stand as a whistle-blower takes a tremendous amount of courage, especially for a person who has family responsibilities. The "sensible" advice would be to remain silent, to keep one's head down: but sometimes the situation cries out for justice and for the help of the Holy Spirit for the person concerned. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

How worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and divinity,
and wisdom and strength and honour.
To him belong glory and power for ever and
ever.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of the universe,
grant, we pray,
that the whole creation, set free from slavery,
may render your majesty service
and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 34:11-12.15-17

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

The Lord says this: I am going to look after
my flock myself and keep all of it in view. As a
shepherd keeps all his flock in view when he
stands up in the middle of his scattered sheep,
so shall I keep my sheep in view. I shall rescue
them from wherever they have been scattered
during the mist and darkness. I myself will
pasture my sheep, I myself will show them
where to rest – it is the Lord who speaks. I
shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray,
bandage the wounded and make the weak
strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I
shall be a true shepherd to them.

As for you, my sheep, the Lord says this: I will
judge between sheep and sheep, between rams
and he-goats.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 22

Response:

**The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.**

- The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he give me repose. (R.)
- Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name. (R.)

- You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. (R.)
- Surely goodness and kindness shall
follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.28

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians.

Christ has been raised from the dead, the
first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death
came through one man and in the same way
the resurrection of the dead has come through
one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all
men will be brought to life in Christ; but all
of them in their proper order: Christ as the
first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ,
those who belong to him. After that will come
the end, when he hands over the kingdom to
God the Father, having done away with every
sovereignty, authority and power. For he
must be king until he has put all his enemies
under his feet and the last of the enemies to
be destroyed is death. And when everything is
subjected to him, then the Son himself will be
subject in his turn to the One who subjected all
things to him, so that God may be all in all.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

**Blessings on him who comes in the name of
the Lord!**

**Blessings on the coming kingdom of our
father David!**

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 25:31-46

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of
Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the
angels, then he will take his seat on his throne
of glory. All the nations will be assembled
before him and he will separate men one from
another as the shepherd separates sheep from
goats. He will place the sheep on his right
hand and the goats on his left. Then the King
will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you
whom my Father has blessed, take for your
heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the
foundation of the world. For I was hungry and
you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave
me drink; I was a stranger and you made me
welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and
you visited me, in prison and you came to see
me.' Then the virtuous will say to him in reply,
'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed
you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did
we see you a stranger and make you welcome;
naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go
to see you? And the King will answer, 'I tell you
solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the
least of these brothers of mine, you did it to
me.' Next he will say to those on his left hand,
'Go away from me, with your curse upon, to the
eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I
was thirsty and you never gave me anything to
drink; I was a stranger and you never made me
welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick

and in prison and you never visited me.' Then it
will be their turn to ask, 'Lord, when did we see
you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick
or in prison, and did not come to your help?'
The he will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far
as you neglected to do this to one of the least
of these, you neglected to do it to me.' And they
will go away to eternal punishment, and the
virtuous to eternal life."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice
by which the human race is reconciled to you,
we humbly pray
that your Son himself may bestow on all
nations
the gifts of unity and peace.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**The Lord sits as King for ever.
The Lord will bless his people with peace.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the food of immortality,
we ask, O Lord,
that, glorying in obedience
to the commands of Christ, the King of the
universe,
we may live with him eternally in his
heavenly Kingdom.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

THE WORD

Portal of the last judgement of Notre Dame de Paris, France

We come today to the final Sunday in the Church's year. The Gospel presents us with a vision of the last judgement, when the Son of Man comes in glory.

We might note that all the (Gentile, that is, non-Jewish) nations are gathered before the throne of judgement. The charge sheet does not mention religious duties but rather social action, or lack of it. One way of looking at this text is to consider that it is dealing with the salvation of the Gentiles. The twelve apostles have been given the task of judging the twelve tribes of Israel; it is the place of the Son of Man to judge the Gentiles. The criterion is how the person has treated the poor, weak and vulnerable members of society. The surprise on the part of those who have shown mercy shows that there was no ulterior motive in their acting with compassion: it was simply the right thing to do for a fellow human being who was suffering. ■

REFLECT

St John Paul II once remarked that a society can be judged by how it treats its weakest members. Perhaps we might include in this category a range of vulnerable people: refugees, immigrants, unemployed people, those who are mentally ill, and so on. The common denominator in such groups, as in those mentioned in the scene of the last judgement, is that they are, in economic terms, non-productive and therefore regarded as not worth very much, "the undeserving poor" as the expression used to be. Yet they have needs, and perhaps the most basic need is to be recognised as a human being, as a person. Pope Francis has spoken of the importance of seeing faces rather than just a vast number of anonymous figures. The need to be loved, to be cared for, to have someone listen to one's story is greater than the immediate material requirements, as anyone who spends time visiting people who are sick or those in prison soon discovers.

The last judgement deals with human values. If this is applied to Gentiles, then it must be relevant to later Gentile Christians as well. But the purpose is not to paint a picture of the end of time, but rather to spur us on to examine our lives in the here and now. The Bible emphasises the importance of social justice and care for vulnerable and neglected people. In this teaching, Jesus is deflecting his disciples' attention away from himself and onto the suffering members of society. Not only is he to be found among them, he is actually identifying himself with them, just as he identified himself with those on the margins of social and religious life when he shared table-fellowship with them and scandalised the respectable people of his day. Those who minister to persons in need often say that they receive more than they give: those who attend to suffering and marginalised people just because they are suffering and marginalised will be surprised at the recognition they receive. ■

SAY

**Whatever you do to the
least of my brothers or
sisters, you do unto me.
(Matthew 25:40)**

LEARN

The description of the last judgement is an apocalyptic vision rather than a parable.

Salvation for all people is presented as behaving in a decent human manner towards people in need.

Sheep and goats were often found in the same flock: goats needed more shelter at night.

DO

Find a way of helping someone mentioned in the list at the last judgement, or someone else who is in need of care or simple attention.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

To you, I lift up my soul, O my God.
In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame.
Nor let my enemies exult over me;
and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

COLLECT

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1.3-8

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
You, Lord, yourself are our Father,
Our Redeemer is your ancient name.
Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways
and harden our hearts against fearing you?
Return, for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your inheritance.
Oh, that you would tear the heavens open
and come down
– at your Presence the mountains would melt.
No ear has heard,
no eye has seen
any god but you act like this
for those who trust him.
You guide those who act with integrity
and keep your ways in mind.
You were angry when we were sinners;
we had long been rebels against you.
We were all like men unclean,
all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing.
We have all withered like leaves
and our sins blew us away like the wind.
No one invoked your name
or roused himself to catch hold of you.
For you hid your face from us
and gave us up to the power of our sins.
And yet, Lord, you are our Father;
we the clay, you the potter,
we are all the work of your hand.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 79

Response:

**God of hosts, bring us back;
let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.**

- O shepherd of Israel, hear us,
shine forth from your cherubim throne.
O Lord, rouse up your might,
O Lord, come to our help. (R.)
- God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted. (R.)
- May your hand be on the man you have chosen,
the man you have given your strength.
And we shall never forsake you again:
give us life that we may call upon your name. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace.

I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ; and God is faithful.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy
and give us your saving help.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 13:33-37

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.**

**I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate
devoutly here below
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**The Lord will bestow his bounty,
and our earth shall yield its increase.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing
things,
you teach us by them to love the things of
heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

If the Word truly became flesh, then God had not only a mother, but also a grandmother, cousins, great-aunts, and weird uncles. If the Word truly dwelt among us, then he was part of a family that, like most, was fairly dysfunctional, a mix of the good and bad, the saintly and the sinful, the glorious and the not so glorious. And this is such good news for us.

Bishop Robert Barron



A NEW CHURCH YEAR!

(MARK 13:33-37)

The imminent coming of the kingdom of God forms the basis of the preaching of John the Baptist and of Jesus. Our new cycle of Sunday readings opens with a similar message, delivered to the disciples at the end of Jesus' public ministry.

The extract for today comprises the concluding verses of Jesus' long discourse to his disciples concerning the second coming and the events which will accompany it, beginning with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The final words are a warning: "Stay awake!" ■

SAY

**Awake from your slumber!
Arise from your sleep!
(Daniel L. Schutte)**

LEARN

The Roman night was divided into four watches: evening, midnight, cockcrow and dawn.

"Advent" means approach, arrival, coming.

The Gospel according to Mark begins with Jesus as an adult: there is no "infancy narrative" telling of events such as the annunciation to Mary or Joseph, or of the circumstances surrounding his birth.

DO

Set your alarm a little earlier than usual for the season of Advent: when it rings, think of Jesus' words "Stay awake!" and thank the Lord for a new day.

**REFLECT**

No one likes the sensation of being watched. We usually feel uncomfortable or uneasy if someone is looking over our shoulder and keeping an eye on us. Some people feel this way about God: the Lord is observing us, noting what we do right, or, more often, what we do wrong, and such individuals live with a guilt complex, that they are never in God's good books. Our Gospel reading today sets out a summary of the Christian ethical life: the master has left his servants with their different tasks, assigned according to their ability; the doorkeeper has been instructed to "stay awake", as the time for the master's return has not been announced, and so could happen at any time; if the servants are going about their duties, they have nothing to worry about, so the master's arrival is not something to fear.

We are beginning the season of Advent, when we think about the coming of Jesus in our human flesh and nature. It can be difficult to preserve this attitude of looking forward to Christmas when for so many people the feast has, to all intents and purposes, already arrived. Christmas carols and songs are to be heard everywhere, and carol services sometimes anticipate the day itself. But, as Christians, we are invited to prepare to celebrate this festival with prayer and penance: this means living these four weeks in the spirit of faith, and examining our lives in this light. We are being asked to think about how we would feel if the Master did arrive, how we are living up to our calling as disciples of Jesus. Are we awake and fulfilling our daily responsibilities calmly and thoroughly, or are we like the disciples in Gethsemane who fall asleep,

just when Jesus needs their support and presence? We are not being asked to work ourselves up into a frenzy of panic and guilt, but to look at ourselves honestly and remedy those compromises we may have fallen into, not out of ill will, but simply because of forgetfulness or tiredness or the like.

When we are expecting a guest, we see that everything is ready, not just out of courtesy for our guest, but also out of a sense of respect for ourselves. Advent is that time to prepare to celebrate the first coming of Jesus, but also a reminder that we should keep in mind that he will come again, and we do not know the day or the hour. ■