



# Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time November 13, 2016

## Faithful Protection

By Janel Esker

**J**esus seems to have a thing about hair. In Luke 12, he claims that every hair on our heads is counted. For some people, that's a lot of counting. And in today's Gospel, Jesus promises that not a hair on the head of the faithful will be destroyed. This detailed knowledge of something so personal suggests a very intimate relationship between Jesus and us—at least from Jesus' end. It's apparent that Jesus knows us very, very well.

And while we worry about invasions of our privacy by family, neighbors, businesses, or the government, Jesus

indicates in the Gospel that our intimate relationship with God benefits us immensely—if we partake in the intimacy.

Every year, as the Church year draws to a close, Jesus speaks about the end times. His words can be quite startling. But Jesus instructs his followers not to fear. What we often miss in these end-times readings is the hope. Jesus speaks about how he'll be with us through any trials or tribulations; he'll protect us down to the hairs on our heads. The first reading from Malachi speaks of the "sun of justice," which will "arise with healing in its wings."

Healing. Protection. Salvation. This is what God seeks for his faithful people at the end of the world. And all God asks in return is for us to be those faithful people—to embrace the intimate relationship Jesus initiated.

As we conclude one Church year and prepare for another and look toward Advent, how deeply have we come to know Jesus this year? How can we better nurture that relationship in the next year so we can be ready for God's salvation when it appears? †

***"The words of Jesus about end times can be startling."***

## Sunday Readings

### Malachi 3:19–20a

"For you who fear my name... the sun of justice will arise with healing in its wings."

### 2 Thessalonians 3:7–12

"We wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us."

### Luke 21:5–19

"I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute."

## A Word From Pope Francis

**Every encounter with Christ**, who in the Sacraments gives us salvation, invites us to "go" and communicate to others the salvation that we have been able to see, to touch, to encounter and to receive, and which is truly credible because it is love. In this way, the Sacraments spur us to be missionaries, and the Apostolic commitment to carry the Gospel into every setting....The grace of the Sacraments nourishes in us a strong and joyful faith, a faith that knows how to stand in wonder before the "marvels" of God and how to resist the idols of the world.

—General audience,  
St. Peter's Square,  
November 6, 2013



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- In what areas of your life do you need help remembering Jesus is there with you, protecting you?
- What is one way you'd like to grow your relationship with Jesus in the upcoming year?



# Sacraments Start With Jesus

By Thomas Richstatter, OFM

If there's anything we can say about the sacraments it is this: They start with Jesus. The loving God who made us wants to be present to us. God knows how hard it is for us to love someone we cannot see or touch. And so the invisible God took flesh, came among us, and was seen in human likeness.

The invisible God, whom no eye has seen, was seen in the humanity of Jesus. God, whose wonder and love are beyond our imagination, wished to

become visible and close to us. In this sin-torn world, divided by war and greed, we must continually retell the story of God's plan for unity and reconciliation. We must keep the dream of God alive. We, the Church, do this first of all in the celebration of the sacraments. The sacraments are the celebration of our Christian story.

Sacraments celebrate the goodness of all creation. Material things are good. Our human bodies are good. God

took flesh and dwelt among us, and in this mystery of taking on human flesh proclaimed that the things of this earth are not obstacles to God but are intended to be windows to the divine. The magnificence of creation enables us to see something of the wonder, the multiplicity, the superabundance of God.

Defining the sacraments is impossible. After all the defining and describing are over, we are left with: "Well, you would have to be there!" One must experience them in person. Through the sacraments, our attention is focused on God. God's plan is disclosed. God's people are renewed. Christ's presence is celebrated. Salvation is realized. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, August 1993

## God's Loving, Meaningful Gift of Reconciliation

By Thomas Richstatter, OFM

I have found that many Catholics have less-than-pleasant experiences with the sacrament of reconciliation because they miss its real point. It's what Jesus does! Through this sacrament, Jesus announces to us, through the Church and its ministers, that our sins are forgiven and we are loved by God.

The word *reconciliation* itself is rich in meaning. It suggests the gift of God's forgiveness and the removal of the barriers we place between ourselves and others. It also suggests the deep peace that comes from being brought back into harmony with God, with sisters and brothers, with the whole of creation.

The sacrament works best when you have already achieved some degree of reconciliation before celebrating the

sacrament. For instance, confessing "I am an alcoholic" is no substitute for going to Alcoholics Anonymous. Sin is not merely breaking rules. For the mature Christian, sin is understood in relation to love. God has loved us so much, and we have so often failed to return that love. When we examine our lives in the light of the message of Jesus we find that Jesus calls us to wholeness, to maturity.

For several years, when I first started my ministry of reconciliation as a priest, I worried about when I could give absolution and when I had to refuse it. Slowly I began to realize that the real problem is not in giving absolution but in helping people hear it. Too few people really hear what Jesus is doing for them. Too few people actually hear and experience "Go in peace, your sins are

forgiven." But those who do hear receive a gift. And they know that they have received a gift. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, "Ten Tips for Better Confessions," August 1990



Lord, I am grateful for your command to love.  
Help me to persevere in loving and serving all people

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,  
Rev. Warren J. Savage  
and Mary Ann McSweeney

### WEEKDAY READINGS November 14–19

Mon. Weekday:  
Revelation 1:1–4; 2:1–5 / Luke 18:35–43

Tue. Weekday:  
Revelation 3:1–6, 14–22 / Luke 19:1–10

Wed. Weekday:  
Revelation 4:1–11 / Luke 19:11–28

Thu. St. Elizabeth of Hungary:  
Revelation 5:1–10 / Luke 19:41–44

Fri. Weekday:  
Revelation 10:8–11 / Luke 19:45–48

Sat. Weekday:  
Revelation 11:4–12 / Luke 20:27–40