



Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
November 17, 2019

Our Leader through Strife

By Mary Katharine Deeley

As we come to the close of the Church year, our readings turn more and more to the end times. These words are not easy to hear. Certainly, when we think about the persecution of Christians, the civil wars that seem far too frequent, and the number of people, nations, and even religious groups who claim to have the sole answer to everyone's problems, we can find a striking resemblance to Jesus' description of the coming days.

What our world is undergoing is not new. In every age people have been persecuted, wars have been fought,

natural disasters have occurred, and many have claimed to be saviors. Jesus admits this openly and still tells us not to despair. He promises to walk with us and to give us the wisdom to speak even in the midst of great trouble. It's tempting to follow the charismatic speakers and powerful leaders who claim to have the truth or single solution to our human limitations and vulnerabilities. Jesus urges us not to do that, but to look to him alone for what we need.

Our imperfect and passing world will always have places and times of great suffering and strife. Jesus doesn't promise to take it all away; he promises to lead us through it. God will never abandon us and will provide more than a temporary fix. If we doubt that, we have only to look to Jesus' death and resurrection to see that he was willing to take the worst the world had to offer in order to offer us the very best. +

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Sunday Readings

Malachi 3:19-20a

For the day is coming, blazing like an oven, / when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

In toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you.

Luke 21:5-19

[Jesus said,] "You will be hated by all because of my name, but... by your perseverance you will secure your lives."

A Word from Pope Francis

We hear these children and their cries of pain... the sufferings, the experiences, and the pain of minors who were abused sexually by priests. It is a sin that shames us. Persons responsible for the protection of those children destroyed their dignity. We regret this deeply and we beg forgiveness.

—Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I sometimes look to charismatic leaders to solve my problems?
- Have I been disappointed by those same leaders?

Why Do We Believe in God?

By Phyllis Zagano

If a friend asked you why he or she should believe in God, how would you answer? Catholics have a common understanding of what it means to speak of God. But in our pluralistic society where different religions meet every day, just what people mean by God is unclear. Christians,

Muslims, and Jews all believe in a single God but think about him differently.

When agnostics say they don't know about God, it is the God of these great Western religions they profess ignorance of. The same is true of atheists, who do not believe in one supreme being who created the world and sustains its existence.

For most, either you believe you are in charge—or not. If you believe you are not in charge but that the cosmos is ordered by a supreme intelligence and not by chaotic chance, then you likely believe in God.

Why is that? A French philosopher named Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) presented an interesting wager. He said we all either bet there is a God or that there is not. The possible results of Pascal's wager really argue for belief in God.

If we bet that there is a God and there is not, then we effectively lose nothing. However, if we bet that there is not a God



and there is a God, then we lose everything. And if we bet that there is a God and there truly is a God, then we win everything. This is a coldly rational way of looking at God, but for many it is a way to start thinking about his existence.

Limits of Human Reason

Even so, we cannot really know much about God. That is because our intellects are limited and if God is God, then he is without limits. Our minds are unable to surround the enormity and complexity of God.

Before Pascal, many great thinkers such as St. Anselm (1033–1109), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), and René Descartes (1596–1650) presented proofs for God's existence. Even today, philosophers argue the point. But arguments and counterarguments about the existence of God are limited by the confines of human reason. In the end, whether we are a brilliant philosopher or the simplest child, the Church teaches that everyone can know and love God.

How can that be? To begin with, Christianity teaches that God came into history as Jesus Christ. The mission of Jesus was to teach us about the Father, who loved Jesus—and us—into being. The fact of that love is understood in the person of the Holy Spirit. This is how

we understand God as the Trinity. In the Church's earliest years, Christians hammered out the definition of God that remains today and which forms the first words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary..."

Unique Evidence

Even so, after millions of people have professed the Apostles' Creed, and after brilliant philosophers have "proved" God's existence, why should we believe?

The question is best understood in the negative. How can anyone see a sunrise or a baby and not believe in God? How can anyone watch a flower grow or see a wave upon the shore and not believe in God? How can anyone who has seen reflected in his or her own heart, the bright star in the east that continues to shine throughout eternity, not believe in God? +



*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 18–23

Monday, Weekday: 1 Mc 1:10–15,
41–43, 54–57, 62–63 / Lk 18:35–43

Tuesday, Weekday:
2 Mc 6:18–31 / Lk 19:1–10

Wednesday, Weekday:
2 Mc 7:1, 20–31 / Lk 19:11–28

Thursday: Presentation of Blessed Virgin Mary:
1 Mc 2:15–29 / Lk 19:41–44

Friday, St. Cecilia:
1 Mc 4:36–37, 52–59 / Lk 19:45–48

Saturday, Weekday:
1 Mc 6:1–13 / Lk 20:27–40