

Be Awake and Watchful

Lectio Divina for the 33rd Sunday C

Opening prayer: Merciful Lord, thank you for this prayerful moment along with our brothers and sisters to read and meditate on Your divine words in our Sunday liturgy. We seek your presence. Speak to us through your words. Grant us your grace. Pour out your spirit upon us. Enlighten our minds with your truth. When life gives us more than we can stand, make us kneel to get your strength. Lord, You are the bringer of peace and tranquility in our troubled moments of our life. Guide us and teach us to be faithful in our prayer life. Place in our heart the deep desire to seek your presence in personal and family prayer. Intervene in our lives and help us to navigate everything in our life with the help of our prayer for your blessings and guidance. This we pray in Jesus' most powerful name- Amen.

I Reading: A reading from the book of Prophet Malachi 3:19-20

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the LORD of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays. (The word of the Lord / Thanks be to God)

Commentary: When Judah returned from exile in Babylon, the people and their leaders showed a tendency to lead loose moral lives due to their contact with the pagans. The priests were irresponsible in correcting the people. Hence, in today's first reading, the prophet Malachi chided them for their religious impiety, dishonesty, and marriages with pagans. The Lord God, through His faithful prophet, Malachi warned Israel that the day of the Lord was coming shortly, and that He had taken note of the goodness of those who feared Him and would have compassion on them in the Day of His coming. But He would punish the wicked and the proud. The image here is that of a blazing oven. For the sinful, the Day will be a day of fiery punishment; for the righteous, it will be the Day of healing.

Responsorial Psalm 98 *The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.*

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.

R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

Let the sea and what fills it resound,
the world and those who dwell in it;

let the rivers clap their hands,
the mountains shout with them for joy.

R. *The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.*

Before the LORD, for he comes,
for he comes to rule the earth,
he will rule the world with justice
and the peoples with equity.

R. *The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.*

II Reading: A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to Thessalonians 3:7-12

Brothers and sisters: You know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you. Not that we do not have the right. Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat. We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food. (The word of the Lord /Thanks be to God)

Commentary: The earliest Christians expected Jesus to come again soon in His Glory (*Parousia*), bringing history to its climax with God's Final Judgment of the living and the dead. Some among the Thessalonians responded to this prospect by abandoning their customary work and leading lives of idleness. They asked themselves, "Why should we spend the small amount of time before the *Parousia* in hard labor?" Some of them were more interested in minding other people's business. Hence, St. Paul corrects them by asking them to imitate his own example of preaching and manual work as a tentmaker, warning them, "*If anyone is unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.*" By his manual labor Paul supported his ministry, preaching his beliefs in word and deed to his fellow workers. We, too, must keep ourselves busy by faithfully discharging our duties and actively bearing witness to Christ through our lives, as we wait in Hope for the second coming of Jesus.

Gospel: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 21:5-19

While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here— the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down." Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" He answered, "See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first,

but it will not immediately be the end.” Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky. "Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.” (The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/Praise to you Lord Christ)

Meditation: There are more than 2000 references in the bible about the first and second coming of the Messiah. The OT speaks of the first coming of the Messiah, as a humble servant. The NT speaks of the second coming of Jesus as the Glorious and Majestic king. The second coming of Jesus is a consistent theme in the NT, especially in the letters of St. Paul and Peter. In the Apostolic Creed we profess “He is seated at the right hand of God the father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead”

Misleading debates and deliberations on the day of the Lord: Talks and Debates about the day of the Lord have always been and continue to be a very hot theological issue in church pulpits, books and movies. Few evangelical churches, scientists and astrologers often confuse and mislead people by speaking about “the day of the world” instead of helping them scripturally. There are doomsayers who interpret wars, earthquakes, famines and calamities as signs of the end of the world. At the same time, quite sadly, there are few who never give a thought about the day of the world. As we are coming closer to the end of this year, we, believers, are called to reflect on the day of the Lord prayerfully and prepare ourselves accordingly.

Only the Father knows the day of the Lord: No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mt 24:36). It is God the Father’s secret to be revealed when he wills. No one can predict by Scripture or Science the exact day of Jesus’ return. Therefore let us not calculate the day rather let us be prepared for the day whenever it comes.

The teaching of the Catholic Church: Many small Christian churches and denominations center on the book of revelation to speak about the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus. But the Catholic Church focuses more on the prophecies of Jesus given in the gospel of Mathew. In the Gospel of Matthew (Ch 24), Jesus describes certain signs that will precede his coming. Some of these include wars, plagues and persecution of Jesus' followers. Catholic teaching sees these as signs that the Second

Coming is near. Yet Catholic Church also believes that these signs have been present since the beginning of the apostles' time. Because of this, Jesus could come at any time. But let us neither be in panic nor panic others because the Lord is in control of our life.

How to understand and respond to the day of the Lord? When we read and hear about future threat or danger, they panic us more. As believers, we need to look at these disturbing images, signs and events as given by our Lord himself to straighten our life and the life of those who are entrusted to our care with holy and healthy thoughts, words and deeds. The end of the world should never be thought of as depressing or frightening because we are in the hands of a good and loving God who journeys with us in the trials and difficulties of life through his eternal word and life giving Eucharist and the teaching of the holy church. It is not only a day of Judgement but also a day of salvation for the believers.

Today's readings, while speaking about the end of the world, also give an assurance that our God will be with us all the days of our lives guiding us, protecting us and strengthening us although we don't know exactly when "Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." His first coming as a redeemer was with his flesh and blood. 2) His second coming would be at the end of time. But he is coming into our lives each and every moment. Hence let us be awake and watchful because his arrival is certain although we don't know the time.

Concluding Prayer for the Bible Study and Lectio Divina: Lord Jesus Christ, we come before You today asking You to remember us during Your second coming to judge the living and the dead. We acknowledge that You are the savior of the world and that You died on the cross to save us from our sins. Give us the strength to resist all evils that may come our way. We want to join You in Your Kingdom in Heaven. Help us to do our task here on earth, which our Heavenly Father has assigned to us. May we accomplish that in the best way possible and in a way that is desirable to God. **Amen**

