

Sunday, November 2, 2008 All Souls Day

First Reading 2 Maccabees 12:38-45 It is a holy and pious thought to pray for the dead.

Second Reading Romans 5:5-11 "Hope does not disappoint."

- **Living Eucharist "Common Threads" -- Homily**

The words of Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical, "Saved by Hope," clarify and deepen the meaning of the Catholic Tradition of praying for the dead. In this Encyclical he also draws our attention to the celebration of the Eucharist in which we pray for the dead. The Pope in #45 and #46 of *Spe Salvi* focuses on the complexity of those who die and who must face the reality of their selfishness and their sinfulness even though at death they were open to truth, to love and to God. Pope Benedict says they must face what Paul in I Corinthians 3:12-15 calls a "purifying fire." With this in mind the following are quotes from "*Spe Salvi*."

*"Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Savior. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgment. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves... But it is a blessed pain, in which the holy power of his love sears through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God. In this way the inter-relation between justice and grace become clear; the way we live our lives is not immaterial, but our defilement does not stain us forever if we have at least continued to reach out towards Christ, towards truth and towards love. Indeed, it has already been burned away through Christ's Passion" (*Spe Salvi* #47).*

"Early Jewish thought includes the idea that one can help the deceased in their intermediate state through prayer (see for example 2 Macc 12:38-45; first century BC). The equivalent practice was readily adopted by Christians... The souls of the departed can receive 'solace and refreshment' through the Eucharist, prayer and almsgiving. The belief that love can reach into the afterlife in which our affection for one another continues beyond the limits of death--this has been a fundamental conviction of Christianity throughout the ages and it remains a source of comfort today.

*"Now a further question arises: if 'Purgatory' is simply purification through fire in an encounter with the Lord, Judge, and Savior, how can a third person intervene? When we ask such a question we should recall that no man is an island, entire of itself. Our lives are involved with one another, through innumerable interactions they are linked together. No one lives alone... In the interconnectedness of Being, my gratitude to the other—my prayer for him—can play a small part in his purification. And for that there is no need to convert earthly time into God's time: in the communion of souls simple earthly time is superseded. It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever vain... Our hope is always essentially also hope for others; only thus is it truly hope for me too. As Christians we should never limit ourselves to asking: how can I save myself? We should also ask: what can I do in order that others may be saved and that for them too the star of hope may rise? Then I will have done my utmost for my own personal salvation as well" (*Spe Salvi* #48).*

Sunday, November 9, 2008 Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Second Reading, I Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17 “You are the temple of God.”

Gospel Reading, John 2:13-22 Jesus speaks of his Body as *the* Temple of the living God

- **Living Eucharist "Common Threads" -- Homily**

The diocesan wide Living Eucharist Initiative focuses on gathering around the altar to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. Today, in commemorating the dedication of the Mother Church of Rome, the word of God draws us into the image of the “House of God” the “Temple.” This House of God now becomes our home in which we worship the Father. Christ is our Temple.

Let us begin with the words of Jesus in John’s Gospel. Christ states clearly that he is the One who will fulfill the yearning of the people of Israel who journey to the Temple in Jerusalem in order to worship the living God. Jesus states that they and all peoples of the earth will experience the presence of the Living God in the flesh, as one of our human family, in his own Person. “*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.*” John adds, “*He was speaking of the Temple of his own Body.*” This will become a reality when Jesus is raised in glory after his death. We enter into Christ as members of his Body each time we celebrate the Mass and express our “Amen” at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer: “through Christ, with Christ and in Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory and honor is yours Almighty Father.”

(Historically the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 AD by the Romans and has never been rebuilt.)

The second reading reveals how intimately we are in Christ.

Paul awakens us to the reality of who we are as the People of God in Christ Jesus. “*You are God’s building.*” “*...for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ.*” “*Do you know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*” Our gathering together for Sunday worship of the Father in Spirit and in Truth awakens within us ***who we are***: **We are the Body of Christ.** Our unity enlivens us individually and as a family in Christ Jesus. **Our “Amen”** echoes our identity in Christ that we our **“Living Eucharist in Christ.”**

- **Living Eucharist “Common Threads” --- Intercessions**

That we who gather around this altar of Jesus to worship the Father in Spirit and truth build a community of love and service to each other and to those in need. We pray to the Lord

That our identity in Christ, as his Body, bring to each of us and to our families that same bond of love that unites Christ to his Father in the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. We pray to the Lord

Sunday, November 16, 2008 Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Second Reading: First Thessalonians 5:16 “Let us not sleep as the rest do, but stay alert.”

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30. “Since you were faithful, come share your master’s joy.” And “Out of fear I went off and buried your talent.”

- **Living Eucharist "Common Threads" -- Homily.**

The Gospel reading sounds reasonable and heads may nod in agreement until we hear these words of Jesus, *“For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”* Is this again the case of the rich getting richer at the expense of the poor? – a reality that is unfolding dramatically on the economic world scene today. Not at all! The reality of which Jesus speaks is growing in the truth about ourselves and shedding light on our deepest fears—often hidden from ourselves, and our expectations and motives for the choices we make. **All of this is directly linked to the fears that may invade us so that we shut down and fail to trust our Father’s love—and we fail to recognize our own worth as his beloved children. This in turn impacts upon our faithfulness—or lack of faithfulness—in our relationship with the Father and with one another.** The talents are only mentioned as a symbol to uncover the motives that underlie the choices we make—or fail to make.

The homilist may want to uncover some of these fears by mentioning several that afflict us today, so that the listeners can begin to take courage to face them. However, we must never face these fears alone. We must always bring them before the Lord as “his people” gathered around the Altar of Sacrifice and Table of Communion. Not only do we hear the Word of God proclaimed and preached, but in the celebration of the Living Eucharist, we are given the very Body and Blood of the Lord as our food that strengthens us. He sheds his Blood *“so that sins may be forgiven.”* **Now is the time to enter into the mystery of God’s love for us, face our fears, seek forgiveness for our lack of responding to his love, and place our faith in him anew. Soon in this celebration we will be invited to share Christ’s Body and Blood and hear the Lord speak to each of us, “Well done good and faithful servant. Share my joy.”**

- **Living Eucharist “Common Threads” --- Intercessions**

That we may recognize that the Father has lavished his love upon each of us by sharing with us the Body and Blood of his Son as food for the journey of life. Let us pray to the Lord

That the joy which the Lord desires to share with us diminish our fears and deepen our faith and increase the strength to live our lives in the service of one another. Let us pray to the Lord.

Sunday, November 23, 2008 Solemnity of Christ the King

First Reading: The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17 “I myself will look after and tend my sheep, says the Lord.”

Second Reading: I Corinthians 15:20-26, 28 “Christ must reign until he put all his enemies under his feet.”

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46 “I was hungry and you gave me food..... Lord when did we see you hungry.....? What you did to one of these least brothers of mine you did it to me.”

- **Living Eucharist "Common Threads" -- Homily.**

The Gospel Reading: The Church places this well known and attractive parable on the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year, not as some grand finale, but to celebrate Christ in our midst every day of our lives, past, present and future. This cosmic “*gathering of all the nations*” around the Son of Man sitting on his throne is meant to make us aware that each Sunday Christ calls us to gather as his people around the altar of our parish churches.. Just as the people of Matthew’s parable were surprised to hear what the Lord has to say to them, so likewise, the proclamation and the preaching of the Word of God is meant to surprise all of us in some way—both the one who preaches as well as the people in the assembly. We are all to listen attentively. He is our Lord and King. What surprises does he have in store for me?

When did we serve you Lord? When did we neglect to serve you? We know the answer well, and so do all in the assembly. We are not asked to recognize the Lord in all his glory seated on the throne—he wants to remain hidden. Rather, our eyes of faith are to be open to the “*least brothers and sisters*” of Jesus. Our Sunday gathering around the Eucharistic altar is meant to open our eyes wherever people gather—collectively as well as individually. Eucharist is truly alive, truly the “Living Eucharist” when the Lord of the Nations, Christ the King, surprises us in our daily lives. How we worship on Sunday affects and effects how we encounter the majestic and humble Lord of our lives. Only a living faith of our rebirth in Baptism will open our eyes to his hiding in each one of us. Christ is King of Nations and Lord of History. The questions that linger from this gospel are “Who are his least brethren?” Am I among them?” “Is Christ the Lord of my life?”

- **Living Eucharist “Common Threads” --- Intercessions**

That Christ may surprise each one of us this week by making himself known Lord in one another. We pray to the Lord

That all in positions of authority, both in the Church as well as in civil government may serve in the spirit of Christ the King who desires to serve and not to be served. We pray to the Lord.

Sunday, November 30, 2008 First Sunday of Advent, Year B

First Reading: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b: 64:2-7 “Why do we wander Lord from your ways?”

Second Reading: I Corinthians 1:3-9 “I give thanks to my God always on your account..”

Gospel Reading: Mark 13:33-37 “Jesus said, be watchful! Be alert!”

- **Living Eucharist "Common Threads" -- Homily.**

Advent begins a new Liturgical Year and the Gospel according to Mark will be proclaimed throughout this year. The color purple reminds us that we are in a season of preparation for the Feast of the Birth of Christ. Time is given to us as a gift of the Lord who desired to be born at an historical point in Time to fill all years, months, days and hours with his grace.

In the Gospel we hear Jesus pointedly reminding us, “*Be alert!*” Time is a gift of the Lord, a gift to be valued and used well. At the beginning of this liturgical year the Church desires to wake us up from the sleep of self complacency and the narrow and even destructive view that time is money—to be spent in the pursuit of material wealth and security or simply in the pursuit of pleasure. In the plan and in the design of God, time is a grace in which we mature and grow in what really matters in the eyes of God. All men and women, rich or poor, all have the same amount of Time. Since the Son of God entered time as Man, all time is holy. Yet time will eventually give way and open to our eternal destiny of glory in union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Time ill spent can result in disaster. So our Lord reminds us “*May the lord of the house not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’*”

The First Reading: These are trying times for us all collectively as well as individually. The present financial crisis reminds us that fool hearty individual and collective choices have affected the entire nation and the entire world. In the false sense of having our wits about us, we were asleep in the realities of God’s truth and his destiny for us. Isaiah asks, “*Why do you let us wander. O Lord, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?*” “*We have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind.*” These words are not meant to discourage us, rather they are meant to wake us up. The Response to Psalm 80 expresses that well, “*Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall saved.*” The beginning of Advent is truly a gift of our gracious Lord. He gives us “more time” to wake up and repent.

- **Living Eucharist “Common Threads” --- Intercessions**

That this “new beginning” given to us in Advent be a time of watchfulness and hope in the Lord who comes to forgive our sins save us from our deepest fears. We pray to the Lord

That we give thanks to the Christ the Son of God who desired to be born in history, so that he may share with us the gift of each passing moment as a grace. Let us pray to the Lord.