

LIVING EUCHARIST INITIATIVE

“Common Threads” Homily Helps & Intercessions

November 2009

November 1, 2009 – Solemnity of All Saints

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14 – *The vision of the great multitude*

1 John 3:1-3 – *We shall be like him*

Mathew 5:1-12a – *The Beatitudes*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Today’s first reading from the Book of Revelation presents us with a stunning picture of the heavenly liturgy. The great multitude of “the saved” stands around the throne of God and the Lamb and worships them with unrestrained praise. By comparison our liturgical celebrations can seem tepid and perfunctory. Perhaps that is because we often forget that within them we are given a glimpse of the beatific vision that is our eternal destiny.

St. John, in his first letter, tells us that when we see God face to face, we shall be transformed and become like him. That process, which reaches its end on the last day, moves forward every time we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion. Every time we truly open our hearts to receive him, his grace transforms us more fully into what we receive. This knowledge should reinforce our efforts to cooperate with the grace bestowed upon us in Holy Communion by becoming individually more Christ like and, collectively, more perfectly the body of Christ.

We cannot do this by embracing the values of the world in which we live. It honors those who are rich and shows deference to those who are self-assertive. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that the poor in spirit are blessed and that the meek will inherit the land. Those who seek righteousness will find it; those who are clean of heart will see God. Indeed, through the eyes of faith they already see him as he manifests his presence in the Eucharistic assembly. In it, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness receive the righteous one himself as food and drink.

Christ, who nourishes us with his flesh and blood, unites us not only to himself, but also to all those who are joined to him by grace. We call this union the ‘communion of saints.’ It begins here on earth, where it is both manifested and fostered in the celebration of the Eucharist and reaches its fullness in heaven. Looking forward to that day when we will share fully in the reality we now experience sacramentally, how can we not cry out with the saints in heaven and say, “*Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*”

Intercessions next page →

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSIONS (November 1, 2009)

That our participation in the diocesan *Living Eucharist* Initiative will open our eyes to the communal dimension of our celebration and make us more aware of our fellowship with all those who are in Christ. We pray to the Lord.

That we, who have become members of the body of Christ in Baptism, may, by receiving the body of Christ in Holy Communion, become more fully what we are called to be. We pray to the Lord

November 8, 2009 – 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 17:10-16 – *The widow of Zarephath*

Hebrews 9:24-28 – *Christ was offered once to take away the sins of many*

Matthew 12:38-44 – *The widow's mite*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

In today's readings, we see two poor widows characterized by their generosity and their trust in God. The first one lived in the time of the prophet Elijah; that is, about 800 years before Christ was born. In those days there was a great famine and the poor widow had only enough food to make one last meal for herself and her son. Nonetheless she was willing to share what little she had when Elijah asked her for a bit of bread. Her generosity was rewarded by a miraculous provision of food that sustained her, her son, and the prophet until the famine was over.

In the Gospel, we find Jesus in the temple seated near one of the offering boxes. The bystanders are impressed with the rich people who make a show of casting in handfuls of gold and silver coins. Jesus, on the other hand, is moved by a poor widow who puts in two small coins. He calls his disciples and says: “*This poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.*”

The generosity of these two poor widows gives us some insight into what Christ's generosity does for us in the celebration of the Eucharist. He, like them, offers a simple gift that has little value in the eyes of the world yet is, in reality, the most valuable of all gifts: the gift of self. Under the appearance of ordinary bread and wine, Christ who gave his life for us on the cross gives himself to us as food and drink so that we may experience the saving grace he won for us.

Christ's generosity to us in the Eucharist, so beautifully foreshadowed in the stories of the two widows, calls for a twofold response. We are called to respond to Jesus' gift to us by giving ourselves to him in love, and we are called to express our love for him by living our lives in service to one another. We may, of course, be tempted to say that we lack the means to help those who turn to us in need, but Jesus' gift of self to us in the Eucharist has already empowered us to carry on his work in the world.

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSIONS

That our participation in the diocesan *Living Eucharist* Initiative may help us to appreciate Christ's generosity to us and lead us to be more generous to one another. We pray to the Lord.

That we might recognize the Eucharist we receive as Christ's gift of self to us, and give ourselves to him in return. We pray to the Lord.

November 15, 2009 – 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Daniel 12:1-3 – *Daniel predicts the day of judgment.*

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18 – *Christ's one sacrifice redeemed all humankind.*

Mark 13:24-32 – *Jesus predicts the day of judgment.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Today, our semi-continuous reading of Mark's Gospel concludes with a passage taken from the Eschatological Discourse which comes just before the passion narrative. In it, we hear part of what Jesus said about the destruction of Jerusalem, his second coming, and the definitive establishment of God's kingdom. Our Old Testament reading gives us an older, more basic formulation of these ideas and offers some insight into their development.

It is taken from the Book of Daniel, which recalls events that happened during the Babylonian exile, but was written about 400 hundred years later during the persecution of King Antiochus Epiphanes. To support those facing a choice between apostasy and martyrdom, it emphasizes what was then a relatively new idea: the resurrection of the dead and their eternal reward or punishment in the life to come. It assures its readers that the persecution they were experiencing is only a passing trial, and that their ultimate victory had already been predicted by the prophet Daniel.

In Mark's version of the Eschatological Discourse, the Lord uses many of the images that are found in the Book of Daniel and other Jewish apocalyptic works. For instance, he speaks of a time of great tribulation unsurpassed by anything since the foundation of the world. What is new is that he sees the prophetic Day of the Lord as the day of his own second coming. When he returns, the angels will gather the elect from the four winds and bring them into the kingdom of God. He, therefore, urges his disciples to be perpetually ready for they do not know the day or the hour of his coming.

In verse 30, Jesus says, “*Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.*” Obviously the second coming did not occur during the lifetime of those who first heard these words. What, then, do they mean? Perhaps they refer to the destruction of Jerusalem which was mentioned earlier in the Eschatological Discourse. Some of Jesus' hearers would still have been alive in 70 A.D. to witness that event. Or perhaps they reveal that Jesus' disciples are already living in the last days. They began with Jesus' birth and will reach their conclusion on the day of his second coming. In this in-between time, we can experience the reign of God in our hearts by putting Jesus' teachings into practice in our lives.

The Eucharist is the proper form of worship for those who live in the in-between time. It is a foretaste of the banquet that the prophets used to depict the fullness and joy of the messianic era. In it, we are nourished with the word of God and fed with the body and blood of Christ so that we can faithfully carry on his mission until he returns in glory. Indeed, the Eucharist impels the community that celebrates it to give ever more perfect witness to that transcendent reality which gives meaning and purpose to our lives in this passing world.

Intercessions next page →

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSIONS (November 15, 2009)

That our participation in the diocesan *Living Eucharist* Initiative will help us to make the liturgy we celebrate a better reflection of the life of the world to come and a more forceful witness to our belief in Christ’s second coming. We pray to the Lord.

That the Eucharist we celebrate will give us the strength to carry out the mission we have been given by Jesus and help us to be faithful to our duty as we await his return in glory. We pray to the Lord.

November 22, 2009 – Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

Daniel 7:13-14 – *The Son of Man is given dominion, glory, and kingship.*

Revelation 1:5-8 – *Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

John 18:33b-37 – *My kingdom does not belong to this world.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

The reign of God began on earth with the birth of Jesus Christ, and will reach its fullness with Christ’s return in glory. In our first reading from the Book of Daniel, written 150 years before Christ was born, we are given a hint of what that ultimate reality will be like. We learn that, on that day, the Son of Man, (a title Jesus often used for himself,) will be given dominion, glory, and kingship. All peoples, nations, and languages will serve him. His dominion shall be an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away; his kingship shall not be destroyed.

The situation in which we find ourselves today is quite different from Daniel’s glorious vision of the future. Our reality is better represented by the Gospel picture of Christ in chains standing before Pontius Pilate. Pilate and the world that he personifies cannot fathom Christ’s claim to kingship nor grasp the supernatural dimension of reality. They can see only the political dimension of life and thus they evaluate Jesus as a possible threat to their own tenuous claims to authority.

Jesus, however, shows no interest in earthly power. His authority rests on the truth of his words. We who seek the truth hear his voice and evaluate his claim in the light of revelation. In him, we see the one whom the prophets foretold and the one who fulfilled the will of God by giving his life for us. We, therefore, freely submit to his rule and live by his word as we await his return in glory.

Every time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we are given a foretaste of that glorious hour in which we will be fully united to the Father and to each other in Christ. The same Christ who will come in glory at the end of time nourishes us here and now with his body and blood so that the bonds of unity may grow stronger among us and bind us more closely to God. This supernatural nourishment, which strengthens us for our pilgrimage to God’s kingdom, also sends us out into the world to prepare the way for its coming.

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSIONS

That our participation in the diocesan *Living Eucharist* Initiative may help us to see every Mass as a foretaste of heaven and as an impetus to build a better world based on love and truth. We pray to the Lord.

That our Eucharistic celebration may open our eyes to the spiritual dimension of life, and help us to hear the word of truth that sets us free from sin and ignorance. We pray to the Lord.

November 29, 2009 – The First Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16 – *I will raise up for David a just shoot.*

1 Thessalonians 3:12- 4, 2 – *May God strengthen you for the coming of our Lord.*

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36 – *Your redemption is at hand.*

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – HOMILY

Jeremiah wrote at a time when the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the kingdom of Judah were inevitable, yet he urges his readers not to despair. He tells them that the Lord will not forget the promises he made to the people of Israel and to the house of David. At some time in the future, God will empower one of David’s descendants to reestablish the kingdom and to rule the people with justice.

During the Babylonian exile, many hoped that God’s promise would be fulfilled when the people returned to the Land of Israel. Though King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild the city of Jerusalem in 538 BC, neither the Jewish state nor the Davidic monarchy was restored at that time. God’s promise, the people realized, would only be fulfilled at a later date.

Jesus, born into the house of David, and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, came into the world to inaugurate the reign of God on earth. He was, however, rejected by his own people which delayed the fullness of redemption until the time of his second coming. In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks to us about his return in glory and the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises. He also warns us not to forget about his coming lest it surprise us like a trap that ensnares those who stumble into it.

The Eucharist that we celebrate gives us a foretaste of the coming kingdom and nourishes our hope for Christ’s return in glory. It prevents us from losing sight of our destiny, and calls to serve Christ faithfully as we await the day of his coming. We do this, as St. Paul tells us in his first letter to the Thessalonians, by showing love for one another and for all so that we might “be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones.”

Love for one another and love for all demands not only a high level of commitment but also a great deal of energy. What gives us the strength to continually build up our community in love and to reach out to others day after day? It is Christ, who gives himself to us as food and drink in the Eucharist, who empowers us to imitate his example by loving one another and reaching out to those who do not share our faith. He is both the driving force of all our activity and the goal we are striving to reach.

Intercessions next page →

- *LIVING EUCHARIST* “COMMON THREADS” – INTERCESSIONS (November 29, 2009)

That our participation in the diocesan *Living Eucharist* Initiative will strengthen our hope for the future, and motive us to serve Christ more faithfully as we await his return in glory. We pray to the Lord.

That when we gather for the celebration of the Eucharist, our assembly may be an ever more perfect representation of the kingdom of justice, peace, and love to which we aspire. We pray to the Lord