



Monthly Reflections

(By clicking on the [blue](#) numbers in the parentheses, it will bring you to the full readings on the USCCB website)

NOVEMBER

01Nov2018

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

Let your sainthood shine!

Genesis says people are made in the image and likeness of God. The gospels say to see Jesus in one another. In other words, we are more like God than we might think. We can see God, not completely, but a lot, in human beings. That's what saints, whom the church celebrates today, do: They show us how to be close to God, how to be holy. They help us to see how God is like us and we are like God—and call us to be more like God, as they were. Answer that call. Imitate the saints. You can be one, too!

Today's readings:

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12a ([667](#)).

“What we do know is this: When God is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.”

02Nov2018

COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED (ALL SOULS' DAY)

Grace will bring you home

When we pray the Hail Mary, we ask for the help of Mary our Mother at two crucial moments of our lives: “now, and at the hour of our death.” *Now* is an important occasion because it is the time of decision. *The hour of our death* is critical because it's the last moment over which we exercise our will. When we pray for the dead, today and every day, we come to the spiritual assistance of those who can no longer help themselves. We can rest assured that one day the church will be supplying us with the same grace.

Today's readings:

Wisdom 3:1-9; Romans 5:5-11 or 6:3-9; John 6:37-40 ([668](#)).

“The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.”

03Nov2018

MEMORIALS OF MARTIN DE PORRES, RELIGIOUS; BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Sanctify the smallest deeds

As the young Martin de Porres (1579-1639) began his vocation in Peru, he longed to bring his mission to foreign peoples so that he could receive the honor of martyrdom. When he realized that God was not going to make this possible, however, he turned his focus from exotic lands to the commonplace tasks he saw right in front of him. This “Brother of the Broom” worked to bring forth the kingdom of God within his abbey by becoming a master of homemaking. He looked after the cooking, cleaning, and

laundry. A fellow brother recounted how Martin showed him how to sow chamomile in the “well-manured hoof-prints of cattle.” No task was too small that Martin couldn’t see God’s plan in it. Throughout the day, look at mundane tasks as saintly deeds.

Today's readings:

Philippians 1:18b-26; Luke 14:1, 7-11 ([484](#)).

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

04Nov2018

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Silly love songs?

Love is all you need. So say every generation’s love songs since the biblical Song of Songs was put to papyrus. When asked to choose the primary commandment, Jesus chose love of God and neighbor. Love is clearly that fundamental. But it’s far more than a feeling. The mandate to love doesn’t dictate our emotions, but rather our priorities. How do we put God and neighbor first, in each decision, with every expenditure of time and resource? If love begins to routinely triumph over self-interest, how might worship, family, society, and world be transformed?

Today's readings:

Deuteronomy 6:2-6; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 12:28b-34 ([152](#)).

“To love [God] with all your heart . . . is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

05Nov2018

Some of my best friends

You’ve probably noticed in reading the gospels and listening to Sunday sermons that the Pharisees come off as the bad guys in a lot of gospel stories. Recent scholars suggest, however, that tensions between Jesus and the Pharisees may have been exaggerated when the gospel accounts were later written down, reflecting conflicts between early Christians and Jews. In fact, a number of other New Testament figures, including Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and perhaps Saint Paul himself, were Pharisees who ended up devoted to the cause of Jesus. We don’t have to consider those who differ with us as enemies—they may end up being some of our best friends.

Today's readings:

Philippians 2:1-4; Luke 14:12-14 ([485](#)).

“On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees.”

06Nov2018

Gotta hand it to them

Take note the next time you practice charity or drop a coin in the cup of someone begging: How will you feel if they don’t say “thank you”? Jesus’ advice to hold a banquet for those who can’t possibly repay us challenges our deepest instincts. It is natural to shower our generosity on friends and loved ones. Jesus challenges us to go further. True charity has no strings attached. Can we reach out a hand to others even if we come up empty-handed?

Today's readings:

Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 14:15-24 ([486](#)).

“Bring in here the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame.”

07Nov2018

Lend a hand

In the Okinawan language two characters make up the word *karate*: *kara* (“empty”) and *te* (“hand”). The name of this martial art, then, is literally “the way of the empty hand.” Tadashi Nakamura, the founder of the Seido form of karate, said: “When we love freely, we can give and share everything. We need hold on to nothing. Our hands can be empty.” Jesus was no martial artist, but nonetheless his way of life was one of an “open hand”: to empty himself in order to give himself. Those who would call themselves his followers should be ready to do the same.

Today's readings:

Philippians 2:12-18; Luke 14:25-33 ([487](#)).

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

08Nov2018

Do what you can

Mother Teresa used to say that she did not add, she subtracted—and she was not talking about arithmetic skills. You’ll never win at the game of measuring the success of service in numbers, she was pointing out. The total of those in need will always outrun your efforts to catch up with it. Though her Missionaries of Charity have helped hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of people, they cannot reach everyone. If you see, as she did, every person to whom you give aid to be another person subtracted from the mass of suffering, the numbers game changes—especially if you consider each one of them to be a child of God. In trying to feed the world’s hungers, you don’t have to do everything, but you can do something.

Today's readings:

Philippians 3:3-8a; Luke 15:1-10 ([488](#)).

“What woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it?”

09Nov2018

FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA

Living stones

How often, when we speak of *church*, we have to clarify whether we mean the faith community or the building where that community gathers. As we celebrate the Lateran Basilica—the pope’s own cathedral, the mother of all churches—we remember that human beings need things that appeal to the senses to remind us of spiritual values. Saint Augustine says that when the community of faith gathers “they are hewn out, as it were, from mountains and forests, like stones and timber; but by catechizing, Baptism, and instruction they are . . . shaped, squared, and planed by the hands of the workers and artisans” and finally are made into a house for the Lord, “fitted together through love.”

Today's readings:

Ezra 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17; John 2:13-22 ([671](#)).

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”

10Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF LEO THE GREAT, POPE, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

You want Leo on your side

Attila, called the “scourge of God,” had sacked Milan and set out to attack Rome in A.D. 452. The Emperor Valentinian III hid behind the walls of a remote castle, and panic seized the capital. In this climate of fear, Pope Leo set out unarmed to meet Attila, and somehow induced him to turn back. A few years later the Vandal king Genseric invaded Rome, but Leo was able to persuade him not to rape and pillage. Leo then set about repairing the damage of the invasion by distributing alms. The next time you find yourself short on courage, call on the memory of this great hero of the tradition. Chances are, whatever you are facing can’t be any worse than Attila!

Today's readings:

Philippians 4:10-19; Luke 16:9-15 ([490](#)).

“The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones.”

11Nov2018

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Generosity, redefined

Many are shocked at the idea of biblical tithing. Give 10 percent—*10 percent!*—of our resources to the Lord? Who would do this? Yet some Christians do it as a matter of course. No statistics indicate that anyone ever died of tithing—or of generosity exercised on any scale. The gospel doesn’t follow the widow who put her whole livelihood into the temple treasury after her signature gesture of trust. Yet we’re led to believe God will care for her with the same extravagance that she shows. The best counsel on generosity remains: give until it scares you.

Today's readings:

1 Kings 17:10-16; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44 or 12:41-44 ([155](#)).

“But she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had.”

12Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF JOSAPHAT, BISHOP, MARTYR

Those “onion-capped” churches

Josaphat, a 17th-century bishop, dedicated his life to bringing together the Ukrainian and Roman churches, a reminder of how much remains undone some 400 years later and more than 50 years since our last ecumenical council. We remember today our *catholicism*, our universalness, because the Eastern Catholic communities, as Father Richard McBrien points out, are “distinct churches, not just ‘rites.’ ” In our Western view, the rituals of the Eastern Churches may seem exotic and mysterious, but we are drawn to brothers and sisters not because of the splendor or beauty of their liturgy but because of our oneness in Christ, something Josaphat deemed worth dying for.

Today's readings:

Titus 1:1-9; Luke 17:1-6 ([491](#)).

“If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”

13Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI, VIRGIN

Bloom where you are planted

When you were young, was there something you wanted more than anything else? As the youngest of 13 children, the girl who would become known as Mother Cabrini (1850-1917) dreamed wild dreams. Her greatest desire was to be a missionary in China, which did not please her parents. They steered her into teaching. After their deaths, Frances started a congregation of missionaries and again thought of China. The pope had other plans; he directed her to the United States. Frances never got to China, but she did a lot of good for children and the sick wherever she went. Wherever you are, make the most of it.

Today's readings:

Titus 2:1-8, 11-14; Luke 17:7-10 ([492](#)).

“Turn from evil and do good, that you may abide forever.”

14Nov2018

Thanks for everything

Many of us have probably learned that there are four basic kinds of prayer: praise, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving, but the last seems to be at the heart of it all. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that “every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving.” Saint Paul says: “Give thanks in all circumstances.” And the poet e. e. cummings—quirky syntax and all—brings thanks and praise together when he says: “i thank You God for most this amazing / day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees / and a true blue dream of sky; and for everything / which is natural which is infinite which is yes.”

Today's readings:

Titus 3:1-7; Luke 17:11-19 ([493](#)).

“Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”

15Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF ALBERT THE GREAT, BISHOP, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Who's learning from you?

Sometimes we find virtue in unexpected places. In Saint Albert's day (c. 1200-80), Christians had been distancing themselves from pagan traditions and philosophers for centuries. So when he began using the work of the Greek thinker Aristotle to explain Christian theology, he scandalized his fellow Christians. Over time, though, the church accepted the “pagan” work of Albert and his student, a fellow named Thomas Aquinas, as foundations for understanding the faith. When Christ cured 10 lepers, he found it was the lowly, foreign Samaritan whose faith was the strongest. Are we too quick to dismiss people and their beliefs because they seem different from ours?

Today's readings:

Philemon 7-20; Luke 17:20-25 ([494](#)).

"The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it."

16Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF MARGARET OF SCOTLAND

Develop your survival skills

There are a number of parallels between the saints the church remembers today and tomorrow, Margaret of Scotland and Elizabeth of Hungary, respectively. They were members of the nobility who entered into arranged political marriages that turned into love matches, where their holiness rubbed off on their spouses. And both were survivors, losing their husbands to war and disease but moving forward to continue their work of service to the poor and the church. Through the twists and turns of life they stuck with their commitments with energy and spirit. Are you doing the same?

Today's readings:

2 John 4-9; Luke 17:26-37 ([495](#)).

"Let us love one another. For this is love, that we walk according to his commandments."

17Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY, RELIGIOUS

Look, up in the sky!

When we're children and hear the gospel about "losing your life" for the sake of another, we imagine jumping in front of a loved one to take a bullet meant for them, or some other equally magnificent act of a superhero. But maturity teaches us that true greatness is found in smaller, quieter acts of heroism. Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-31) was a woman of privilege thanks to an arranged marriage into a royal family, and she likely could have lived a long and privileged life if she had so chosen. Instead, she devoted every waking moment to helping the poor and the ill, regularly putting the riches of her royal family at the disposal of those less fortunate. Elizabeth died at the tender age of 24, likely from serving those stricken by an epidemic. But she remains a true superhero and model for any of us who strive to "lose our life" for others.

Today's readings:

3 John 5-8; Luke 18:1-8 ([496](#)).

"Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night?"

18Nov2018

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Christ the light shine

It used to be that sensible people shrugged off most apocalyptic talk as a religious scare tactic. After all, only Chicken Little seriously believes the sky is falling and life as we know it is ending! Yet the present global situation makes apocalypse sound pertinent, even descriptive of the texture of our times. The light of hope can seem dimmer than ever; nonetheless, when fear begins to sound like the wisest course and paralysis the only option, hold fast to the Good News and its promise of light and life!

Today's readings:

Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32 ([158](#)).

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

19Nov2018

Live your faith day by day

You may know “Day by Day,” the popular song from the 1970s musical *Godspell*. The refrain, which was adapted from a 13th-century English prayer, includes the lines: “Three things I pray: To see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly.” Those words pretty well summarize the yearning in the heart of all Christians. It begins with “seeing clearly” because it’s hard to love or follow Jesus unless you do your best to focus on him and his message. The blind man who begged Jesus “Lord, please let me see” spoke for all of us. Spend a moment today reflecting on blind spots in your own faith—areas where doubt, fear, ego, or simple neglect have carried the day thus far.

Today's readings:

Revelation 1:1-4; 2:1-5; Luke 18:35-43 ([497](#)).

“Have sight; your faith has saved you.”

20Nov2018

Mercy is the great equalizer

“Mercy that is truly Christian is also the most perfect incarnation of ‘equality’ between people,” wrote Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Rich in Mercy*. Our compassion compels us to see the dignity of persons in need. They become lovable simply because they are. Despite any faults, poor choices, weaknesses, or circumstances beyond their control, those in need are worthy of alms (from the Greek words for *compassion* and *mercy*)—for Christ’s sake. Strive to see in others what Jesus saw in tax collectors, sinners, and the least among us: the face of God.

Today's readings:

Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22; Luke 19:1-10 ([498](#)).

“Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.”

21Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Moment by moment, grace upon grace

Make a list of what you’ve been taught about Mary of Nazareth: virgin, mother of Jesus, Mother of God, conceived immaculately, assumed into heaven bodily—it’s an astonishing list. Her life was “full of grace,” yet the Bible says little of her beyond the first moments of Jesus’ life and the last. Church tradition supplies the rest, not to invent history but to illustrate how this Jewish girl’s life was made holy by her choices and those of the family that nurtured her. Our families become holy in the same way, one decision at a time.

Today's readings:

Revelation 4:1-11; Luke 19:11-28 ([499](#)).

“To everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”

22Nov2018

THANKSGIVING DAY

Gratitude is good for the body and soul

The gratitude you feel on Thanksgiving is good for your mental health. Practicing daily gratitude, psychologists say, results in higher levels of energy, alertness, enthusiasm, and determination. Better yet, people who feel grateful are more likely to feel loved and repay kindnesses. Benedictine Brother David Stendl-Rast, one of the founders of gratefulness.org, says that, by freely choosing gratitude, we can “create a better life for ourselves and for others.” Now there’s something to be thankful for.

Today's readings:

Sirach 50:22-24; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Luke 17:11-19 ([943-947](#)).

"Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"

23Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF CLEMENT I, POPE, MARTYR

Take a letter

We tend to think that important letter-writing in the early church was limited to the New Testament, Saint Paul being the star correspondent. But others wrote letters to Christian communities, like the third bishop of Rome, Clement, who wrote to the same church in Corinth that Paul had tried to straighten out earlier. Though we don’t know much else about Clement, we know he lived in Rome at the end of first century, only a generation or two after Peter and Paul had died there. Clement mentions their deaths, writing of Peter, “Let us set before our eyes the illustrious apostles. Peter . . . endured not one or two, but numerous labors, and when he had finally suffered martyrdom, departed to the place of glory due to him.” Let us recall those early martyrs who gave everything for Christ and his church.

Today's readings:

Revelation 10:8-11; Luke 19:45-48 ([501](#)).

“Jesus entered the temple area and proceeded to drive out those who were selling things.”

24Nov2018

MEMORIAL OF ANDREW DŨNG-LẠC, PRIEST, AND COMPANIONS, MARTYRS

Culture gets holy; holiness gets culture

In 1988, when Pope John Paul II canonized the Vietnam martyrs whose feast we celebrate today, he used the opportunity to speak of the value of enculturation. The pope praised the martyrs and witnesses for initiating dialogue among various religious groups and proposing ways to put Christian faith in action that were suited to Asian culture, such as teaching that “one should respect and venerate one’s ancestors according to the customs of the land in light of the mystery of the Resurrection.” Out of respect for these humble and courageous martyrs, do your best to respect the customs and religious practices of all faiths as you freely practice your own cultural expressions of faith.

Today's readings:

Revelation 11:4-12; Luke 20:27-40 ([502](#)).

“Some of the scribes said in reply, ‘Teacher, you have answered well.’”

25Nov2018

SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

By whose authority

Every instance of bad leadership reinforces the vital importance of good leaders. In church and in government, at work and at home, we need people of wisdom and vision to take us into the future. Leaders must lead, not merely from a platform or agenda, but with a profound respect for the common good as an unshakable principle. Championing the common good makes families more holy, workplaces more just, societies more civil, and governments more noble. What kind of world do we want to live in? At what kind of authority will we bend our knees?

Today's readings:

Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18:33b-37 ([161](#)).

"So Pilate said to him, 'Then you are a king?' "

26Nov2018

Generosity is not for sale

Strolling through the crooked, crowded, exciting streets of the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, you'll see vendors hawking every imaginable treasure. Spices from the Orient, silks of India, beauty products made with Dead Sea salts, prayer shawls of every description. You can buy almost anything there, including "the widow's mite," according to the sandwich board in front of an archeologically minded coin shop. Whether or not the coins are authentic to the time of Jesus, the one thing you can never acquire from any shop is the spirit of generosity that humble woman in the gospel story demonstrated. Is your generosity big enough to impress Jesus?

Today's readings:

Revelation 14:1-3, 4b-5; Luke 21:1-4 ([503](#)).

"I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest."

27Nov2018

Time's up

At the close of each church year, Catholics get a little apocalyptic in their focus. While it's in the fine print of mortality that someday we'll face the final hour of this life, it's a thought we keep under wraps most of the time. Yet the hour of the Reaper is coming: How prepared are you to be "reaped"? The church invites you to practice the daily examination of conscience to consider the harvest of each day, both the chaff and the grain of your efforts. (Search on "examination of conscience" online for some options.) Consider today: What fruits have you gathered to present to the Lord?

Today's readings:

Revelation 14:14-19; Luke 21:5-11 ([504](#)).

"Use your sickle and reap the harvest, for the time to reap has come."

28Nov2018

Walk the walk and you will talk the talk

As we approach Advent, we already begin to hear talk of preparing for Christ's coming—making ourselves ready. And of course we have gospels full of warnings to “Be prepared,” “Keep vigil,” “Bring oil for your lamps,” “You know not the day nor the hour.” But when it comes to defending our faith at the end times, Jesus tells us to not prepare our testimony in advance. Huh? Apparently we're to get busy putting our faith into action now, and when the time comes for putting it into words, we can rely on the wisdom of the Spirit to help us out.

Today's readings:

Revelation 15:1-4; Luke 21:12-19 ([505](#)).

“I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking.”

29Nov2018

Put an end to gloom and doom

Each new generation has its heralds of doom reading signs in every calamity that the end is near. But rest assured, the end-times are not our concern. Our commission is to stand amid the chaos and “give birth to a dancing star,” to quote Nietzsche at his poetical best. Our choice is always to embrace life—a gift freely given to us by One who loves us. So ignore those who speak the language of scarcity and gloom. They want you to live small, fear-filled lives. “Stand erect,” Jesus says. “Drink from my cup.” Do this, and you will be satisfied and most surely saved.

Today's readings:

Revelation 18:1-2, 21-23; 19:1-3, 9a; Luke 21:20-28 ([506](#)).

“Stand erect and raise your hands because your redemption is at hand.”

30Nov2018

FEAST OF ANDREW, APOSTLE

Cast a wide net

In the gospels, Andrew is portrayed as a simple fisherman who brought others to Jesus. He brought forward the boy with the five loaves and two fishes. He brought his brother Simon the news, “We have found the Messiah.” In Jerusalem, he introduced some Greek men who wanted to meet Jesus and speak to him. Later, he was a missionary said to have traveled widely before being martyred on a cross in the shape of an X. Because of the belief that Andrew preached in Scotland, the Scottish put his cross on their flag. While few of us will be remembered on national flags, all of us can be remembered as people who did our best to introduce others to the healing message of Jesus.

Today's readings:

Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22 ([684](#)).

“Immediately they left their nets and followed him.”

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