

19th November 2023

Second Sunday before Advent

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Living the Word: 1 Thessalonians 5. 1-6

Our knowledge of the world is huge compared to the world of the Thessalonians in Paul's day. But in terms of knowing the truth of history and the cosmos, we are no different to them. The one thing we do not know is also the one thing we need least to know, the exact timing of the return of Jesus. We are to have confidence, Paul says, to face the future that in all things we are the Lord's. To those who do not believe in the return of Jesus it will be like a thief in the night, but to those who do believe he has been a guest in the house of your heart for years. The difference will be that on the great Day of the Lord we will be able at long last to see Jesus with our own eyes. Life will make sense. In the face of the return of Jesus we are not to act in a crazy way but rather to lead holy, quiet lives of simplicity, kindness, hope, and joy, all rooted in prayer that in themselves bear witness to the daylight of God's kingdom presence in which believers live every day.



This parable seems to encourage us to take risks with property that does not belong to us! But the reality is that the world is entrusted to us and one day we must give an account of what we have done with it. It is a particularly apt parable when applied to the environmental crisis confronting us. Our care for God's creation is not only a political task but a personal priority for each of us. This world is our home, the only one we have. Looking after it properly requires each of us to be responsible. Let's all be aware that God the Creator has shared His creation with us, and asks our co-operation in caring for it. We are all given talents and skills. They can be used for our own personal benefit and/or for the good of others. If we bury our gifts or refuse to use them in the service of others we hurt both ourselves and them. We thank God when we use His gifts creatively. This helps us develop our relationship with Him, the giver of every good gift.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 25: 14-30

Collect

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Saints & Heroes: St Cecilia 22nd November

St Cecilia is remembered as the patron saint of church music and is often depicted holding a musical instrument. St Cecilia was born into to a wealthy family, and from a young age had dedicated her virginity to God; despite this, her parents married her off to a pagan called Valerian. Throughout the wedding ceremony, Cecilia sang to God in her heart that her virginity may not be taken from her. Upon their wedding night, her husband came to her and was told by her that an angel was guarding her virginity, and if he went to a certain place, he would see it. Shocked at her suggestion, Valerian went to see what his wife was taking about. Valerian saw the angel and was baptised by the Pope upon his wife's advice. Valerian and his brother dedicated their newfound Christian lives to burying the bodies of martyred Christians. Cecilia preached the gospel to all whom she met, and was eventually arrested and sentenced to death after having converted hundreds to the faith. Her death was particularly gruesome, as after an attempted beheading, she survived for three days, all the while preaching the Gospel of Christ. Her home in Trastevere, Rome, was eventually converted into a church, and is now the site of St Cecilia's Church.