Readings and Reflections for the Week

SUNDAY 8 November - 32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Reading 1, Wisdom 6:12-16, Psalm 62(63)
Reading 2, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Gospel, Matthew25:1-13
The wise and foolish virgins

Monday 9 November – THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA
Reading 1, Ezekiel 47:1-2,8-9,12, Psalm 45(46)
Reading 2. 1 Corinthians 3:9-1,16-17
Gospel, John 2:13-22
Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up

Tuesday 10 November – St Leo the Great, Pope
Reading 1, Titus 2:1-8,11-14, Psalm 36(37)
Gospel, Luke 17:7-10
You are merely servants

Wednesday 11 November – St Martin of Tours, Bishop
Reading 1, Titus 3:1-7, Psalm 22(23)
Gospel, Luke 17:11-19
No-one has come back to praise God, only this foreigner

Thursday 12 November – St Josaphat, Bishop, Martyr
Reading 1, Philemon 7-20, Psalm 145(146),
Gospel, Luke 17:20-25
The kingdom of God is among you

Friday 13 November – Feria
Reading 1, 2 John 4-9, Psalm 118(119)
Gospel, Luke 17:26-37
When the day comes for the Son of Man to be revealed

Saturday 14 November – Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Reading 1, 3 John 5-8, Psalm 111(112)
Gospel, Luke 18:1-8
The parable of the unjust judge

SUNDAY 15 November - 33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Reading 1, Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20,30-31
Psalm 127(128), Reading 2, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
Gospel, Matthew25:14-30
You have been faithful in small things: come and join in your master's happiness

United with Churches together in St Albans we pray for all members of the New Testament Church of God.

SAINT OF THE WEEK ST MARTIN OF TOURS
Martin was born around the year 316, in Pannonia, now Hungary, on the edges of the Roman Empire. The son of a military tribune, he grew up in Pavia, Italy, after his father was given land in that city. Although his parents were pagan, Martin was interested in Christianity, and aged 12 dreamt about becoming an ascetic and retiring to the desert. But an imperial edict commanded him to join the army so apparently putting an end to his dream of a life of solitude and prayer. Martin became a soldier and was stationed in Gaul. Sometime around the year 335, Martin, now an Imperial guard, was making his rounds when he came across a half-naked beggar. Taking compassion on the poor man, Martin took his military cloak, cut it in two, and gave half to the beggar. The following night, Jesus appeared to Martin in a dream, wearing the cloak. Addressing the angels who accompanied him, the Lord said, "Behold, here is Martin, an unbaptized Roman soldier: He has clothed me." The dream left a deep impression on Martin who was baptised the following Easter. He continued to serve in the army for 20 more years but as soon as he could, Martin left the army, and travelled to Poitiers to meet Hilary, the bishop, who as an adversary of the Arian heresy was later exiled by the emperor Constantius II (who supported the Arians). Upon hearing this, Martin, who was visiting his family in Pannonia, retired to a hermitage near Milan. When Hilary returned from exile, Martin went to France to find him and obtained his permission to found a monastery near the city of Tours. Having erected small huts for himself and his companions, Martin, who had clothed the poor Christ, himself became poor. Dedicated to prayer and the preaching of the Gospel, Martin travelled throughout France. His popularity led the people to choose him to be Bishop of Tours in 371. Martin agreed, but refused to live like a prince while the people suffered; so the poor, the sick, and prisoners continued to find shelter under his mantle. He lived near the city walls in the monastery of Marmoutier, said to be the oldest in France. Dozens of monks, including many of noble birth, lived with him and shared his austerities. In 397, Bishop Martin, now almost 80 years old, travelled to Candate (now Candes-Saint-Martin) to heal a local schism. Due to his virtue and strong personality, he was able to restore peace; but before he could return home, he fell ill with a violent fever. He asked to be laid out on the bare earth, and breathed his last before a great crowd. St Martin of Tours is the patron saint of tailors.

Prayer: O glorious Saint Martin of Tours, faithful servant of Christ and humble shepherd of souls, you who once shared your cloak with a poor stranger, teach my heart to recognize Christ in those who suffer. Obtain for me the grace to live with generosity, to give without hesitation, and to show mercy to those in need. Help me remember that even the smallest act of charity can reflect the love of God in this world. Saint Martin, defender of the poor and example of humility, intercede for me before the Lord. May your example lead me to live with faith, kindness, and courage each day. Through Christ our Lord, Amen

REFLECTIONS

Reading 1, Wisdom 6:12-16

For the Bible, Wisdom is not knowledge, such as scientific or philosophical knowledge acquired by study and learning, or even the sound judgment acquired by experience and maturity. It is the reflection of God's own Wisdom, the Wisdom by which God creates the world and guides humanity. Wisdom is therefore divine, a reflection or image of God, 'the reflection of the eternal light and the image of his power'. Everything created is good in so far as it expresses this Wisdom of God. In the New Testament Jesus is seen as the incarnation of God's own Wisdom as well as the incarnation of the 'Word' of God, for Jesus is both the first-born and the summit of God's creative purpose. In Greek 'Wisdom' is a feminine noun, and therefore divine Wisdom is often represented as a female character, a hostess inviting to her banquet all who desire true Wisdom. We need to seek out this Wisdom. It can be granted only by God, but God is eager to share divine Wisdom with those who truly search for 'her'. This reading is given here to pair with the gospel-reading because of the image it uses of keeping awake, watching early for the coming of Wisdom/the bridegroom.

Is my skill at cookery or car-maintenance the same as me or a part of me? Is God's Wisdom the same as God?

Reading 2, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The first Christians were unclear about many things in their faith. The Thessalonians were obviously worried about the fate of Christians who had died. Had not Paul taught them that Christ had conquered death? What was this talk about an imminent final coming of Christ to bring history to its end? How soon would it occur? Paul gives an answer in terms of a familiar image, a Roman triumphal procession. After a great victory in battle a Roman general could be granted a 'triumph', marching through the streets of Rome with his victorious army amid cheering crowds, like a successful football team or local regiment coming home. There was no need to worry about Christian friends and relations who had died, for they would come with Christ in his triumphal procession, and the rest of us would join him on the way. All this, of course, is imagery. Neither Paul nor anyone else had any idea when it would occur. But he teaches with firm confidence that it would occur. The timing is irrelevant. We don't mind waiting a bit, so long as we can be sure that we will all be re-united in the joyful triumph of Christ's victory over death.

Do we need to know any more about the end of the world than this?

Gospel, Matthew 25: 1-3

Of course they weren't bridesmaids! According to the custom of the time the girls were attendant on the bridegroom, to greet him with their lamps as he arrived at the wedding-reception. Anyway, half of them weren't ready, let him down, and then found themselves shut out. There is a subtle difference between the parables given in Mark's and Matthew's gospels. In Mark they are all about the sudden coming of God's Kingship in history, at the time of Jesus. Jesus proclaimed that the crisis was now. In him God's reign had arrived: it was time to take drastic action. Matthew's parables take a longer-term view: there will be a final judgment at the end of time, for which we, in the Church and in the course of history, must prepare. Some will and some won't. Some will be found to be wheat, others to be weeds. When the catch of fish comes in, some fish will be thrown away, some kept. Some will be sheep and others goats. Each year, as the liturgical year draws to a close, the Church reminds us of this. And the End will be sudden and unpredictable, like a burglar on the one night I forgot to lock the door, or like a mouse-trap snapping shut, or like the unpredictable moment of birth pangs.

Am I ready for the coming of Christ? What does it mean to be like the wise bridesmaids and have oil in my lamp?

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