

## Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed – (11/2/08)

This weekend we are celebrating two feasts, All Saints Day on Saturday and All Souls Day on Sunday. On All Saints Day we rejoice with all the people of God who have gone before us and rest in God's peace in heaven. On All Souls we pray for all the faithful who have died and not yet completed their purification before entering the presence of God. We commonly refer to these as the souls in purgatory. We might ask why they are undergoing this purification? It is because to abide in the presence of God requires the removal of all remnants of sin on our souls. The remnant of sin on our soul is the temporal punishment due to sin that has not been remitted, even sins forgiven in confession. To put it simply and bluntly, all sinners have to pay the price for sin because of God's perfect Justice.

Remember we have mentioned in the past that God's infinite Mercy and perfect Justice go hand-in-hand. God's infinite Mercy has already been attained for us sinners through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Therefore, the eternal consequences of sin have been fully paid by Jesus for our salvation. All we have to do is repent and ask for God's mercy and we have salvation. But all sin also has temporal consequences because of perfect Justice. When our sins are forgiven in the sacrament of reconciliation through our repentance, we have salvation (assuming we have made a good confession). But we still have to make up for the consequences of sin in time. This is because all sin damages or breaks the bond of the relationship of love between us and God and between us and our neighbors. Jesus repairs the damage with God; we are responsible for repairing the damage between us and our neighbors.

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## Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome – (11/9/08)

The Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome is important to the rest of the world because the Basilica, dedicated in 324, is the Episcopal seat of the pope as Bishop of Rome and is the “mother and head of all churches in Rome and the world.” Still today it serves as a reminder of the Bishop of Rome as “first among equals,” and represents the unity of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. So today throughout the world all Catholics pray in thanksgiving for the gift of the Church to the world as a faithful source of the true teaching of Christ.

It is pretty amazing that this feast falls on the same day that we are doing our parish-wide visitations for our Capital Campaign. It was not planned with that in mind but perhaps God is smiling on our work to build a new home for the parish. The purpose of any church is to provide a focused place to worship God, give thanks for His many blessings, and to pray for each other. We also grow in our knowledge of God and in experiencing His love for us in the sacraments. God is truly the source of the life-giving water that flows out of the Temple and into our lives. As we celebrate the Holy Eucharist in this holy space let us try to keep our attention on the source of that grace and let go of all our worries and concerns for just a moment. We can then experience even for the shortest time a sense of “holy timelessness” with God. May the peace and joy of Christ be with us! Amen.

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – (11/16/09)

Thanks to everyone, and most especially the volunteers, for your participation in our parish-wide visits last week to ask for pledges for our building campaign. May God continue to bless us in this difficult work of giving glory to God by building a “House of Prayer.”

This Sunday’s readings remind us once again that God has a plan for us to accomplish here on earth, a plan that recognizes and builds on our free choice to cooperate with God’s grace in the way we live out our lives. God is responsible for all the abilities we have, and He expects us to develop those gifts for the betterment of our world and our neighbors. At the end of our life, God will hold us accountable for the way we have lived our lives. Results aren’t God’s first concern, the quality of how we strive to live the Gospel message is. And that striving should continue to our last breath, not until we “retire.” We never retire from God’s work. Another way of saying this is what Mother Theresa said, “God doesn’t call us to be successful in life, He calls us to be faithful.”

Let us pray that we will be ready to give an accounting of the fidelity of our life at any moment. Then we will be ready to rejoice for eternity with all God’s faithful children from all times and places. Amen!

## Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King (11/26/08)

The Feast of Christ the King is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. The readings for the last several weeks have been preparing us for this feast of the culmination of life on earth. At the end of time the King will judge the world. Although many have falsely claimed that a God of Divine Love could never send anyone to hell, it is clear from scripture that God does judge us, and some will go to heaven and some to hell. Or another way of putting it, He allows us to determine our own eternal destiny by the way we live on earth.

I don't think many people believe they are deliberately choosing hell through the way they live, but they live lives that are self-centered and devoid of love for others (especially those who have nothing to give in return). Most people have friends they will treat nicely, but this is not a sign of "love of neighbor" because it is a self-centered "love:" it still revolves around ME. When we care for a human life we do not know, that is a true sign of love of neighbor, as long as we do it from pure love and not to make ourselves feel good. God expects us to care for one another as a reflection of His care for us.

On this feast let us also remember most heartily to allow Jesus to be Lord of every aspect of our lives. If we hold something back, if we do not want God to rule over every part of our lives, then Jesus is not really our Lord and King. Sobering thoughts in today's readings. May we all allow Jesus to rule every minute of our life beginning today! Amen!

## First Sunday of Advent (11/30/08)

Then-Cardinal Ratzinger once wrote: “The purpose of the Church’s year is continually to rehearse her great history of memories, to awaken the heart’s memory so that it can discern the star of hope. It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope.” Today’s first reading reminds us of Israel’s (and our) sinfulness and despair, and yet we find hope as we call on God to form us into the beautiful works of His hands. With our cooperation, God will recreate us in His image, breathing into our stony hearts new life and soul.

The gospel reading is very similar to what we have been hearing the last few weeks of the liturgical year. However, there is a slight difference in focus; the end-of-the-year readings focus on an upcoming accountability or judgment. Our Advent reading focuses on our attitude as we wait. We are called to be extremely vigilant and alert so that we are ready to meet the Lord on His return. Our daily life is our vigilance as we pray and perform acts of charity in preparation for the coming of the Lord in Glory (or the end of our life on earth). In fact, we all will meet the Lord in our neighbor in need many times before He actually returns. Let us pray during this Advent that we will open our hearts and memories to God’s plan, which “eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it dawned on man what God has in store for those who love Him.” Amen!