

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
2021—B Cycle



*Courtesy of [Crawford Jolly](#)
on unsplash.com*

Opening Prayer

(Edited for use here)

A Prayer for Perseverance

Lord Jesus Christ,
I believe in you as my God and my Savior.
Keep me faithful to your gospel and commandments.
By sharing in the Eucharist,
may I come to live more fully
the life you have given me.
Keep your love alive in my heart and soul,
so I may become more worthy of you.
Teach me to value and be thankful
for all of your gifts.
And help me to strive for eternal life.
Amen

Source: [Catholic.org](https://www.catholic.org)

Scripture Readings

Daniel 12: 1-3 “I, Daniel, heard the word of the Lord.”

Psalm 16: 5, 8-11 “I set the Lord ever before me.”

Hebrews 10: 11-14, 18 “By one offering (Jesus) made perfect forever those who are being consecrated.

Mark 13: 24-32 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will not pass away.”

We have reached the final weekend in B Cycle liturgical construct. The Scripture readings for this final week of Ordinary Time always take us to consideration of the

“end times.” Our liturgical readings approach this mysterious future event from both the ancient Hebrew and first century Christian perspectives.

The “bridge” between the end of this liturgical season and the C Cycle Advent season appears next week in the Feast Christ the King.

A Reading from the Book Daniel (12: 1-3)

“At that time, Michael will rise, the Great Commander who defends your people. It shall be a time of anguish as never before since the nations first existed until this very day. Then all those, whose names are written in the book, will be saved. Those who sleep in the Region of the Dust will awake, some to everlasting life but others to eternal horror and shame. Those who acquired knowledge will shine, like the brilliance of the firmament; those who taught people to be just will shine, like the stars, for all eternity.”

Personal Reflection

The Book of Daniel appeared late in pre-Christian history (ca. 165 BC). In all likelihood, its author belonged to the [Hasidean](#) movement that began twenty or thirty years before. That movement intended to renew the Jewish faith. The author of the book witnessed the events he speaks of.

By the year 200 BC, religion and faith in Israel had become rigid. For the past two centuries, a social system led exclusively by priests planned every detail of life with the temple and its liturgies at the center.

Jewish priests stood at the top of the social pyramid. Their primary concern? To maintain the established order. God had fulfilled the prophets’ promises with the return from exile. Those who returned rebuilt the Temple. In the minds of many Jews, there was nothing else to wait for.

In those few centuries before Daniel, the Israelites believed that, after death, they would have a diminished form of life somewhere under the earth. They held no hope of resurrection or reward for the individual, but only for the nation. If the priests and people acted righteously, God would bless and uplift their nation.

Persecutions during the days of the [Maccabees](#) and reflection on the destiny of martyrs led to a new, expanded conviction that the dead would have their share of happiness in the kingdom of God. To achieve this, of course, they had to believe in a higher form of Afterlife.

It took a long time for the Jewish people and leaders to come to an awareness that there had to be life after “life.”

— *What are my expectations about Afterlife for myself? For members of my family? My closest friends?*

— *What do I believe happens to “bad” people when they die? Where did my conviction come from?*

— *How confident am I that I will never find in heaven horrid people like Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Tse Tung, who committed horrendous crimes against individuals and masses of people?*

Responsorial Psalm 16 (5, 8-11)

True happiness: David's psalm of confidence.

You are my inheritance, O Lord.

O Yahweh, my inheritance and my cup,
my chosen portion—hold secure my lot.

I keep Yahweh always before me;
for with him at my right hand,
I will never be shaken.

You are my inheritance, O Lord.

My heart, therefore, exults;
my soul rejoices;
my body, too, will rest assured.

For you will not abandon my soul to the grave,
nor will you suffer your holy one
to see decay in the land of the dead.

You are my inheritance, O Lord.

You will show me the path of life
in your presence, the fullness of joy
at your right hand, happiness forever.

You are my inheritance, O Lord.

Personal Reflection

There is a presentiment in this psalm of David that union with God will prove stronger than death. Fast forward a thousand years to the life of Christ Jesus. His resurrection guaranteed the resurrection of all human bodies (in some form). Loyalty to God calls us to look more closely at our attachment to all the “little gods” that might claim our attention and take over our lives. A great temptation for those of us living in what we call the “Western world” coaxes us to sacrifice our Christian identity on the altars of money and “things.”

“You will show me the path of life.”

— *How does the life I am living today demonstrate that I am following the “path of life” David spoke of? In what specific areas might I do better at living my faith?*

A Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews (10: 11-14, 18)

“Every (Jewish) priest stands daily by the altar, offering . . . the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. Christ has offered, for all times, a single sacrifice for sins, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God, waiting until God puts his enemies as a footstool under his feet. By a single sacrifice, he has brought those who are sanctified to what is perfect forever. So, if sins are forgiven, there is no longer need of any sacrifice for sin.”

Personal Reflection

The following commentary on Hebrews 10 comes from [Israel Kamudzandu](#) at [Working Preacher](#). “What... are the implications of what the Hebrew preacher is saying in these verses? I... suggest three elements... to interpret these verses in a practical way.

“First, sacrifices are meaningful when they give people what they need, rather than what they want....

“Second, people must prepare themselves to receive... and they can only do this after prayer. Prayer is absolutely necessary for spiritual and faith transformation. Without prayer, all that we do in our churches slides into meaningless and powerless rituals.

“Third, people must pray for holiness.”

— *When did I pray for something I wanted but didn't really need? What was the situation? The outcome?*

— *Why do we Catholics repeatedly offer the sacrifice of Christ at Mass, when Christ our high priest offered himself on the cross once and for all times?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (13: 24-32)

“Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Later on in those days, after that disastrous time, the sun will grow dark, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall out of the sky, and the whole universe will be shaken. Then people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And he will send angels to gather his chosen people from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the sky.

“Learn a lesson from the fig tree: as soon as its branches become tender and it begins to sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the time is near, even at the door.

“Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all this has happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But, regarding that day and that hour, no one knows when it will come, not even the angels, not even the Son, but only the Father.”

Personal Reflection

After announcing the end times, Jesus speaks of an even more important event. In mystical, futuristic language, he describes the end of the world or, more precisely, its transformation. The sun will grow dark, the moon will not give its light (“climate change”?). Jesus borrows images from Isaiah 13: 10 and 34: 4. Isaiah expressed the confusion, the surprise, and the disintegration of the people and the universe. God will then send angels, a common image in Jewish writings about God's judgment. Likewise, the trumpet blasts referred to in Matthew 24: 31 and First Thessalonians 4: 16 should not be understood literally. Jesus returns to both the lesson learned from destruction of Jerusalem in past wars and the coming end of time altogether. The Day mentioned is the day of the Judgment, called by the prophets the “Day of Yahweh.”

Then Jesus draws on an image his listeners easily identified with. He uses a fig tree's natural wisdom in predicting the changes of season from winter to spring. The ultimate end of time, however, is seen only by God. The 'when' and the 'how' remain a mystery known only to God.

"Learn a lesson from the fig tree: as soon as its branches become tender and it begins to sprout leaves, you know that summer is near."

— *What are some ways my body communicates to me about what might lie ahead for me?*

— *How "grace"-fully am I accepting the messages my body seems about what I can expect in the near and more distant future?*

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening

Video

Bishop [Robert Barron](#) comments on [Apocalyptic Literature](#) (8 min.)

— *How might I compare the theme of this presentation to events occurring in our own country today?*

[John Michael Talbot](#) offers a 1-minute reflection on Mark 13: 24-32.

— *How will I live my life today (this very day)?*

Music

["Holy Spirit Rain Down"](#) sung by [Hillsong](#), written by Russell Fragar

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

Based on this weekend's Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding ...

*(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships... and
(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God's love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?*

Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?

Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern?

Why do I hesitate?

In light of this weekend's Scriptures, take time to write about events occurring in your life this week and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Week's Scriptures

Feast of Christ the King

Daniel 7: 13-14 "I saw one like a son of man coming."

Psalm 93: 1-2, 5 "The Lord is king in splendor robed."

Revelation 1: 5-8 "Jesus Christ is the faithful witness."

John 18: 33-37 Pontius Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Prayer for Understanding of Scripture

Risen Christ,
the Scriptures say that the revelation
of your words brings light
and gives understanding
to the inexperienced.

Please reveal things to me as I read
and help me to learn and understand,
so I can do what you say
and obey with all my heart.
Amen.

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from [Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](https://www.catholic.org/bibles/cccbe)

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Coming very, VERY soon!! Inspector Javert: at the Gates of Hell

(a novel exploring "what happens next?" after death)