

## A Priest's Lot

Today's readings are a stern call to conversion for priests who obviously have a special call to holiness. Like a parent cares for his or her children, a priest is entrusted with the spiritual children of God's family. His example, his words, and his way of carrying out his service all have profound effects on the holiness of the Church.

The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, condemns the priestly class of the Jews because they had turned away from God's commands and led people astray with faulty instruction. This rule of thumb from the Old Testament is still valid today: so goes the priests, so goes the people!

Jesus himself had harsh words for priests and religious leaders as well. It is clear from the Gospel that one of the main reasons why Jesus was ill-received by so many of his contemporaries was because the priestly class opposed him. "He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him" (John 1:11).

Saint Paul gives us the example of what priests should be. They should so love their people that they become one with them in their suffering, joys, and victories. Rather than build up heavy burdens, they should make them lighter by lending a hand to lift them. They shouldn't dilute the gospel and its demands but, with brotherly love, show the beauty of the gospel by the joy and charity with which they live. Like a good parent, they should be the first to wake



Piece: *The Citizens of Rome Acknowledge St. Gregory the Great, 1500s*  
 Artist: Lorenzo Sabbatini  
 Location: Vatican Museums

up and the last to go to bed. Slow to judge, quick to forgive. —Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

### *For Reflection*

*As a parent, am I a priest in my family? Do I lead my children in prayer, teach them the faith, and set a good example of faith and love of God? Do I pray for priests and offer them support and help?*

*With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us (1 Thessalonians 2:8).*

## Calendar

### Monday

November 6

Weekday

Rom 11:29–36

Lk 14:12–14

### Tuesday

November 7

Weekday

Rom 12:5–16b

Lk 14:15–24

### Wednesday

November 8

Weekday

Rom 13:8–10

Lk 14:25–33

### Thursday

November 9

*Dedication of the  
Lateran Basilica*

Ez 47:1–2, 8–9, 12

1 Cor 3:9c–11, 16–17

Jn 2:13–22

### Friday

November 10

*St. Leo the Great,  
Pope and*

*Doctor of the Church*

Rom 15:14–21

Lk 16:1–8

### Saturday

November 11

*St. Martin of Tours,  
Bishop*

Rom 16:3–9, 16, 22–27

Lk 16:9–15

### Sunday

November 12

*Thirty-Second Sunday  
in Ordinary Time*

Wis 6:12–16

1 Thes 4:13–18

or 4:13–14

Mt 25:1–13

# Dear Padre,

**A priest recently said the Scriptures should set us free. I wish this could happen to me! I feel so trapped by life. My job, my kids, my aging parents, bills, health insurance. Everywhere I turn I'm cornered by responsibilities. How can Scripture help?**

Many of us feel trapped by life. Life is complicated because often there is too much to do, too many obligations, too much going on. We feel burdened and many times even guilty that we're not doing more. There's never enough time. People are demanding and sometimes hurt our feelings. We can easily become victims of it all. Or we can become defensive, aggressive, or overly "people pleasing."

I invite you to pray the Scriptures daily. Open yourself to the Spirit's movement that's alive in the word and alive in you. Read a short passage. Think about it. Put yourself into the scene. Picture yourself listening to Jesus speak. Allow him to use your name. Let

yourself be comforted, loved, freed, healed, and challenged to change your hectic pace in life. Instead of trying to control all that happens, begin to surrender and trust in God. The word of God can lead us to freedom if only we open our hearts to the wisdom it contains. It will probably lead you to prayer, to ask for God's help. You may find your heart opening to receive the love of God you encounter in the word. Remember, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it" (Luke 11:28).

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PEXELS



## A Word From Pope Francis

*Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one's life. Those who listen to us and observe us must be able to see in our actions what they hear from our lips, and so give glory to God! I am thinking now of some advice that Saint Francis of Assisi gave his brothers: preach the Gospel and, if necessary, use words. Preaching with your life, with your witness.*

—Homily, April 14, 2013



## Get Ready

As we near the end of the liturgical year and prepare for Advent, the readings get us ready for the Second Coming of Jesus by addressing our own final encounter with him. The Church summarizes the last realities each person must reflect on: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. In short, when we die we will face personal judgment. If our response has been to return Jesus' love, the reward will be heaven. But if we reject Jesus, the result will be hell.

This should not be a source of anxiety or fear, but rather faith, serenity, and hopeful confidence. If we are not quite ready, now is the age of mercy, and God's grace abounds for those who seek it. It is a healthy thing to be prepared and wise. All of us know our final encounter with Jesus at the end of life is coming. It would be foolish to ignore it or not maturely reflect on its implications.

Oil is the natural resource mentioned in the Gospel because without the light and warmth that an oil lamp provided, the guests could get lost in the dark or need to abandon the wait because of the cold. As we journey through this life, awaiting the marriage feast of Jesus, our hearts can get dimmed and icy if we are not lit by the oil of love and the warmth of the Spirit. We don't know the day or the hour when Jesus will come take us into the eternal banquet, but we know for sure that day is coming.

The wise guest is the person fueled by the oil of love and ready for any eventuality. As the Boy Scout motto goes—Be Prepared.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

### *For Reflection*

*Am I constantly in contact with the mercy of God so I am always ready? How am I living now so that I am always prepared for the final encounter with Jesus?*

*[Jesus said,] "Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).*

## Calendar

### Monday

November 13  
*St. Frances Xavier Cabrini,  
Virgin*

Wis 1:1-7  
Lk 17:1-6

### Tuesday

November 14  
*Weekday*

Wis 2:23-3:9  
Lk 17:7-10

### Wednesday

November 15  
*Weekday*

Wis 6:1-11  
Lk 17:11-19

### Thursday

November 16  
*Weekday*

Wis 7:22b-8:1  
Lk 17:20-25

### Friday

November 17  
*St. Elizabeth of Hungary,  
Religious*

Wis 13:1-9  
Lk 17:26-37

### Saturday

November 18  
*Weekday*  
Wis 18:14-16; 19:6-9  
Lk 18:1-8

### Sunday

November 19  
*Thirty-Third Sunday  
in Ordinary Time*

Prv 31:10-13,  
19-20, 30-31  
1 Thes 5:1-6  
Mt 25:14-30 or  
25:14-15, 19-21

# Dear Padre,

**How will it happen that Jesus will come again and lead us “through the gates”? Do you think that this will happen any time soon?**

We have it from the best of authorities that the date of the world’s end is hidden. Jesus said: “But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matthew 24:36).

In spite of Christ’s admonition that the day of his Second Coming is known but to God, there have been countless false prophets who have confidently but incorrectly predicted a date for the end of the world. Most of these foolish forecasters based their claims on their misinterpretation of the Book of Revelation.

Throughout history, many have attempted to use the Book of Revelation as a timetable. They misinterpreted symbols and numbers as a forecast of what would happen in their own century. Over and over again, such people have used Revelation to predict the end of the world.

The world might end tomorrow, in five billion years, or somewhere in between. Jesus tells us we can’t know for sure. We are sure, however, that this world will pass away. And for each one of us the world will end at the moment of death. What matters is that we should always be ready to meet Christ, our Judge. And we shall be ready if we follow Christ, our Shepherd. Jesus leads us safely through this life by his teaching, his example, and his grace.

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PEXELS



## *A Word From Pope Francis*

*Dear brothers, unless we train ministers capable of warming people’s hearts, of walking with them in the night, of dialoguing with their hopes and disappointments, of mending their brokenness, what hope can we have for our present and future journey? It isn’t true that God’s presence has been dimmed in them.*

—Address to Bishops of Brazil, July 27, 2013

## What's Our ROI?

The Gospel today encourages good investments! Jesus heaps praise on the good servants who were faithful in small matters and rewarded with the joy of the master. The servant who gets called wicked and lazy is punished, not because he miscalculated a risk but because he feared his master and took no risk at all. He was frozen by the thought that he could lose everything, so he buries the talent and anxiously awaits the master's return. He is wicked not for investing poorly but for not investing at all.

God has given us all so many talents, and he does so for us to enjoy a grand return on investment (ROI). He wants us to use our talents, work them, develop them, and—at the end of our lives—enjoy showing him the way they have multiplied. Like a loving parent, he knows that much of our happiness is in developing and growing those talents with his grace. Those talents are a sign of his call and an invitation to step out in faith.

Parents, your job is to help your children develop their talents and dreams. A confident, enthusiastic, and risk-taking child is a sign of parents who know the balance of loving discipline, positive motivation, and a healthy distance. Children who feel secure in the love of their parents are willing to venture out and invest their talents, for they know someone will always be there to accompany them and catch them if they fall.



Piece: *Charity* (detail), 1507  
Artist: Raphael  
Location: Pinacoteca, Vatican Museums

Our loving God is the first to know this and so invites us with this parable to trust, invest, and enjoy the returns.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

### *For Reflection*

*What are the most important talents I have? Think of virtues, abilities, qualities, time.*

*Which talent should I invest in more so I can enjoy the return God wants?*

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*[Jesus said,] “It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them” (Matthew 25:14).*

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## Calendar

### Monday

November 20

Weekday

1 Mc 1:10–15, 41–43,  
54–57, 62–63  
Lk 18:35–43

### Tuesday

November 21

Presentation of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary

2 Mc 6:18–31

Lk 19:1–10

### Wednesday

November 22

St. Cecilia,  
Virgin and Martyr

2 Mc 7:1, 20–31

Lk 19:11–28

### Thursday

November 23

Weekday

1 Mc 2:15–29

Lk 19:41–44

### Friday

November 24

St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc,  
Priest, and Companions,  
Martyrs

1 Mc 4:36–37, 52–59

Lk 19:45–48

### Saturday

November 25

Weekday

1 Mc 6:1–13

Lk 20:27–40

### Sunday

November 26

Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
King of the Universe

Ez 34:11–12, 15–17

1 Cor 15:20–26, 28

Mt 25:31–46

# Dear Padre,

**Our daughter and son-in-law graduated from Catholic high schools, but they're not bringing up their children in the Catholic faith....I feel an obligation to the children, but I don't know what to do.**

I understand your concern and sadness, but we must always remember that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's religious education. People such as priests, teachers, grandparents, and godparents can help, but they cannot usurp the role of the parents.

If your daughter is truly alienated from the Church or has truly given up her faith in God, then anything you say or do will probably make her angry. In that case, your best approach is one of kindness to her and her family and regular prayer for her and for them.

Often, however, young parents aren't really alienated from God or the Church but have just drifted away. If they decide they should do something about their children's religious training, they often don't know who to contact. If this seems to be the case with your daughter and her husband, gently inform them that you will be glad to help get the children started. Contact your parish priest (or theirs) for the necessary information. This can be a big help to people who have been away from Catholic practice for a long time.

Adapted from *Understanding Scrupulosity: Questions and Encouragement*,  
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## A Word From Pope Francis

*I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security....More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37).*

—The Joy of the Gospel (*Evangeliium Gaudium*), November 24, 2013

## Actions Matter

This amazing scene that takes up the whole of the wall of the Sistine Chapel is a reminder of the dramatic moment of Christ's Second Coming, when he will judge the living and the dead. The Father has given all authority to the Son (John 5:22). Michelangelo places in the upper register the symbols of Christ's passion as a way to highlight the instruments of Christ's victory and ours, as well as to show that it was through his loving sacrifice that he has earned the authority to judge the living and the dead.

Christ comes riding on the clouds with his Mother at his side, head turned and eyes cast down, as the days of her intercession have come to an end. Our chance to appeal to his mercy has passed. We will stand naked before him, and our actions will be the gown that dresses us for the feast of the Lamb (Matthew 22:11).

Jesus, in his mercy, wants no surprises and personally reveals the material to be covered by this final exam. Today's passage highlights that our charity and kindness will go a long way toward him recognizing us at the last day. Scripture even goes

so far as to say that this "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Those who know his love and spread it with their actions will be preparing themselves for a blessed judgment.

Jesus makes it clear that our faith will also be a theme upon which he will search our hearts. He desires not mere words but loving listening and the heeding of his will. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

This is a great source of consolation for those who love him sincerely, even if imperfectly.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC



### For Reflection

*Am I ready for that final exam?  
What should I do today in order  
to be ready for the loving return  
of Jesus?*

Piece: *The Last Judgment* (detail), 1535–1541  
Artist: Michelangelo  
Location: Sistine Chapel

*[Jesus said,] "And he will separate them one from another,  
as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32).*

## Calendar

### Monday

November 27  
Weekday

Dn 1:1–6, 8–20  
Lk 21:1–4

### Tuesday

November 28  
Weekday

Dn 2:31–45  
Lk 21:5–11

### Wednesday

November 29  
Weekday  
Dn 5:1–6, 13–14,  
16–17, 23–28  
Lk 21:12–19

### Thursday

November 30  
St. Andrew,  
Apostle  
Rom 10:9–18  
Mt 4:18–22

### Friday

December 1  
Weekday  
Dn 7:2–14  
Lk 21:29–33

### Saturday

December 2  
Weekday  
Dn 7:15–27  
Lk 21:34–36

### Sunday

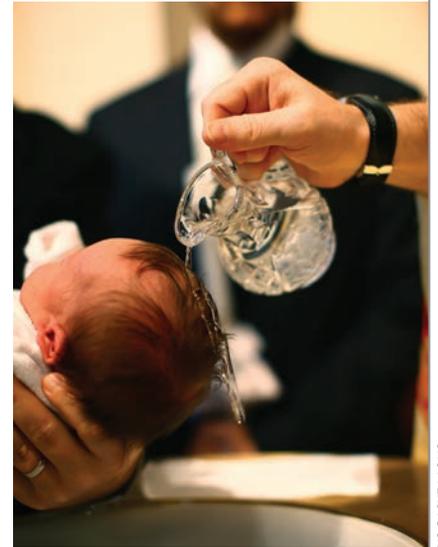
December 3  
First Sunday  
of Advent  
Is 63:16b–17, 19b;  
64:2–7  
1 Cor 1:3–9  
Mk 13:33–37

# Dear Padre,

## When I was younger the stance of the Catholic Church was that if you were not baptized, you did not get into heaven. Is this still the case?

The Gospels present to us various passages that, when looked at together, give us a sense of whether or not baptism is necessary for salvation. Jesus says, “No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5), and “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). These passages show that salvation is the combination of baptism and believing. Those who “see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,” but who also purposely reject it, remain in darkness (see 2 Corinthians 4:3–4, 6).

The First Letter of John 4:7 tells us that “everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.” Here the gift of salvation comes to us in loving. Also, in Matthew 25, we have the great scene of the Last Judgment, where people are saved because they ministered to Christ in the poor and the hungry, even though they might not even have been aware of Christ’s presence. Salvation here comes because of kind action. Baptism, then, combined with believing is certainly one of the means to salvation, but it’s not the only means. In God’s goodness, other roads can lead us into the kingdom. God’s mercy and goodness are not limited to the sacrament of baptism (see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1257–1260).



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## A Word From Pope Francis

*Mother Church teaches us to give food and drink to those who are hungry and thirsty, to clothe those who are naked... through the example of so many dads and mamas, who teach their children that what we have extra is for those who lack the basic necessities. It is important to know this. The rule of hospitality has always been sacred in the simplest Christian families: there is always a plate and a bed for the one in need.*

—General audience, September 10, 2014