



The Word ...

It was fitting that we should have such a high priest:
holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners,
higher than the heavens. He has no need, as did the high priests,
to offer sacrifice day after day,
first for his own sins and then for those of the people;
he did that once for all when he offered himself.
(from Heb 7:23-28)

The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher.
You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.'
And 'to love him with all your heart,
with all your understanding, with all your strength,
and to love your neighbor as yourself'
is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."
(from Mt 12:28-34)

Pondering the Word ... *"He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day."*

The doctrine the author of Hebrews presents in this passage is clear: Jesus offered himself "once, for all." Therefore, all the burnt offerings and sacrifices offered by the Jewish high priests "day after day" in atonement for sins are now unnecessary, even unworthy next to the sacrifice of Christ.

But from a literary standpoint, I was struck by the irony of the image that Jesus had no need to offer "sacrifice day after day." Jesus sacrificed every day. He sacrificed his own needs and will to do the will of his Father (Jn 6:38). Moved by compassion, he sacrificed his need for rest (Mk 6: 31-34) and his strength (Lk 8:46) to be with the crowds, healing and teaching. And he sacrificed his own hurt and disappointment to forgive the rejections and denials of his fair-weather friends (Lk 22:61; 24:36).

Loving God and others with everything we are...not out of obligation; not because that's what we've been told to do; not out of our hope for eternal life...takes great sacrifice. It takes putting ourselves and our own egos and needs aside. It takes vulnerability. It takes falling in love.

Living the Word ...

"I love you, O LORD, my strength... my rock, my fortress, my deliverer." (Ps 18)

Have you ever said, "I love you" to God? Like the psalmist, our love for God may be tied to need or to what God does for us; his love seems to be based on God's protection. Psychologist Erich Fromm wrote: *"Immature love says: 'I love you because I need you.' Mature love says: 'I need you because I love you.'"* Do we love God (and others) out of need? If so, we'll always be disappointed when our perceived needs are not met. Or do we love based on an intimate experience of the Spirit's presence? Pray this week for the grace to fall in love with God. It makes loving others-- and ourselves--so much easier! *"Fall in Love, stay in Love. It will decide everything."*
<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/prayers-by-st-ignatius-and-others/fall-in-love/>

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Nov 1: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit...they who mourn...the meek...they who hunger and thirst for righteousness... the merciful...the clean of heart...the peacemakers...they who are persecuted...”* (Mt 5:1-12)

Which of the beatitudes resonates with you? Which one is the hardest for you to be or do? (We sure could use more peacemakers!) **Today’s reflection:** *For each of these attributes there is a promise of a gift. Which of these gifts has the most meaning to you at this time in your life? Take time to consider how you are blessed and challenged to be part of God’s Kingdom.* **Provision:** *Make an effort to live out today the beatitude that challenges you the most.*

Tue, Nov 2: *“Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death...”* (Rom 6:3-9))

You can read this passage from the doctrinal perspective or you can make it real in your life. If we have been baptized in Christ, then we can expect to experience what he experienced: Suffering yes, but also joy. Frustration, but also wonder. Loneliness, but also the comfort of God’s presence. Death yes, but also resurrection. **Today’s reflection:** *Take the long view of anything you are troubled or struggling with. Ask Jesus to help you see and hold in balance all the things you experience.* **Provision:** *Focus today on the blessings you experience.*

Wed, Nov 3: *“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another...”* (Rom 13:8-10)

What is your opinion? Do you think you “owe” it to others to love them? I didn’t say you have to hang with them, go to lunch with them... just love them. I admit I object to the idea that I “owe” or am obliged to love others—that doesn’t seem like real love to me. Real love isn’t an obligation. **Today’s reflection:** *What would need to change in order for you to claim you really love others? Not just your family and friends, not just those you like to be with...everyone. And not out of obligation or the promise of salvation?* **Provision:** *If there is someone you have trouble loving, look to find something loveable about them.*

Thu, Nov 4: *“We shall stand before the judgment seat of God...each of us shall give an account to God.”* (Rom 14:7-12)

Having an informed conscience. We’ve talked about this in the past. It does not mean we do everything right; it means we are honest with ourselves and with God, knowing and acknowledging when we have succeeded or failed to love, not out of obligation, but from the heart. It’s using our God-given gifts to make good decisions for ourselves, not just relying on the words of others. Each of us will stand before our God as we are, not with a group of church leaders or legal counsel shaking in their own shoes. An informed conscience does not rely solely on scholarship, although the wisdom of trusted advisors can be very important. If we are honest, most of us know in the pits of our stomachs when something feels right or wrong. **Today’s reflection:** *Is there something you are told to do or believe that you struggle with? This can be a difficult, but fruitful place of prayer. Fervently ask the Holy Spirit to be your guide.* **Provision:** *An informed conscience is aided by an informed approach to what we choose to read and listen to. Begin building resources you can rely on.*

Fri, Nov 5: *“For the children of this world are more prudent... than the children of light.”* (Lk 16:1-8)

Lots of people far smarter than I am have differing interpretations of the gospels for today and tomorrow. I can’t do it justice here, only to say that, like most things in Scripture, it shouldn’t be taken out of context. But it just might be an interesting follow-up to yesterday’s reflection. The servant has been dishonest (there is debate as to whether his dishonesty was his master’s attempt to avoid the sin of usury), he recognizes the cost of his wrongdoing, and goes about making amends. We can hope he learned his lesson—i.e., the gift of Counsel—even if *was* just about saving his own skin! **Today’s reflection/provision:** *Prudence—the thing the master commends the servant for—is a virtue we strive for, but often, we come about it the hard way—by learning from our sins and mistakes. Reflect and give thanks for those lessons you have learned from poor decisions you made in the past. Look at one lesson, not from the perspective of saving your skin, but with the eyes of love. Does it change the lesson?*

Sat, Nov 6: *“... for what is of human esteem is an abomination in the sight of God.”* (Lk 16:9-15)

Jesus is referring to the Pharisees’ love of money. Of course, not everything humans esteem is an abomination to God, but some things we value might not match up to what God values. **Today’s reflection/provision:** *We tend to value security and control (remember yesterday’s servant) which is often measured in dollars and cents. So while we don’t worship money, we sure do value it. What is your hierarchy of values? How does it compare to what you esteem? Observe yourself today. Does your living reflect both what you esteem and what you value?*