



The Word ...

“Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead
and ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father,
to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.
Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him.
(from Rv 1:5-8)

Pondering the Word ... “...every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.”

When you read this phrase, what comes to mind? Is it a warning, a death sentence to those who pierced him? Or is it an invitation, a chance to repent along with all the nations of the world?

Try as I may, I often find my gut reaction is the negative viewpoint: “Those who pierced him, those of us who continue to pierce him...game over. Our goose is cooked.” Given the situation in which the author of Revelations, John of Patmos, finds himself, one could assume he means just that! But scholars posit this is not about divine retribution, but about the peace that will descend upon the earth, and all tribes and nations, who will, in unison, beat their breasts in lamentation for the wrongs and evils we have wrought.

Let’s not wait until “one like the Son of Man” descends from the heavens. Let’s live the peace of his incarnated presence right here and now by changing our hearts and minds and learning to love as he did.

Living the Word ...

Broken record alert: I can’t overemphasize the gift that is the nightly Examen of Consciousness. Remember, it’s not the same as what Roman Catholics are called to do before the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is, as one author says, “rummaging backwards through your day,” sifting through the sands of the hourglass to look for moments, people, and places that shine, that catch your eye.

First, thank God for the gift of your day. Ask the Spirit for light. Next, review the day briefly and nonjudgmentally, starting with positives--the blessings, the graces, the things that gave you life—time with beloved friends and family, a great meal, laughter, sunshine, etc.—and the times you were graced to be Christ to others. Then move to those things that drained you, times that diminished the Spirit within you. These are not necessarily sins although it can be a time for contrition; it’s a time to look what drained you and why. I know lots of people who tend to “own” everything that goes wrong. Ask yourself, “What can I learn from this day, from what gave me life and what drained life?” You may choose to look forward to the next day and pray for any special graces you will need. End with a favorite prayer. The Examen is a great way to access the peace of “the one who is and who was and who is to come.”

(Next week, as we begin Advent, think about incorporating the Examen into your Advent preparations. *Come and See* will be replaced by *Provisions for the Journey to Bethlehem* for the Advent/Christmas season.)

Personal Reflections and Ideas ... _____

Mon, Nov 22: *"Please test your servants for ten days. Give us vegetables to eat and water to drink"... after ten days they looked healthier and better fed than any of the young men who ate from the royal table. (Dn 1:1-6, 8-20)*

I'm surprised I've never seen this passage used as a promotion for a vegetarian/vegan lifestyle! Daniel and his companions refuse to eat from Nebuchadnezzar's table, requesting basic foods that won't violate Jewish law. God of course nourishes them physically and intellectually. **Today's reflection:** *We can easily be tempted by the rich things of this world. As we go into this season heavy with commercialism, reflect: What are the basics you want to "consume" this Advent? Provision: Become aware of things that distract you from preparing for the Christ Child.*

Tue, Nov 23: *"You, O king, are the king of kings; to you the God of heaven has given dominion and strength, power and glory; ...making you ruler over them all; you are the head of gold."(Dn 2:31-45)*

The fawning praise Daniel gives Nebuchadnezzar makes me queasy. You hear flattery like this in other OT readings of the Jewish occupations and exile. It's wise, I guess. As long as Daniel is not violating God's law, he might as well earn points with the king! It's not unlike what the elders do in Jesus' time: "Let's just give Caesar our allegiance...a necessary evil to keep our nation together." **Today's reflection:** *"Do not let us mistake necessary evils for good." (C. S. Lewis) We all make compromises to keep the peace. Are there areas of your life or in society where the price of peace has become too steep for you? Provision: Take a stand on an issue that speaks to you, but show respect to those in power or who may disagree.*

Wed, Nov 24: *"The fingers of a human hand appeared, writing on the wall... Daniel answered the king: "You have rebelled against the Lord of heaven... you praised the gods of silver and gold... But the God in whose hand is your life breath and the whole course of your life, you did not glorify." (Dn 5: 1-6, 13-14, 16-17, 23-28)*

This of course is the source of the expression, *"the writing is on the wall,"* used to signify an imminent, usually inevitable, ominous event; in this case, the death of King Belshazzar. People use this phrase now about climate change and political upheaval. I wonder: if Belshazzar had recognized and repented his sin, would the hand have withdrawn? **Today's reflection/provision:** *Some of us tend to ignore the writing on the wall when it comes to our health, both physical and spiritual. We can be overwhelmed by the magnitude of global or national problems, but I invite you to reflect on a difficult topic: Where in your life might you be ignoring "the writing on the wall?" Journal about your prayer and ask the Spirit to give you the courage to recognize and act on things that might need to change.*

Thu, Nov 25: *The king was deeply grieved; he worked to rescue (Daniel)...He cried out sorrowfully, "O Daniel, has God been able to save you from the lions?" Daniel answered: "O king, live forever! My God has sent his angel...For I have been found innocent before him; neither to you have I done any harm, O king!" This gave the king great joy. (Dn 6:12-28)*

Scholars are divided as to whether the characters in the Book of Daniel are historical, but the lesson is what matters: *"By your perseverance you will secure your lives." (Lk 21:19),* and, oh, BTW, you just might secure the lives of others as well! **Today's reflection:** *We read in the Book of Daniel that both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius come to believe in God through their experiences with Daniel's faith. How have you, how might you soften the hearts of others by your witness of faith? Provision: Commit to be a bearer of faith and love to those you meet today. (Happy T'giving!)*

Fri, Nov 26: *"... I saw the fourth beast, terrifying, horrible...I was considering the ten horns it had, when a little horn, sprang out of their midst...it had eyes like a man and a mouth that spoke arrogantly."(Dn 7:2-14)*

Robert Alter suggests the "little horn" that spoke arrogantly was a dig by the author aimed at a certain political leader who emerged in Greece! The haughty, the arrogant...they may rage and reign for a time, but their ilk will be defeated by the Son of Man! **Today's reflection:** *There is a pandemic of arrogance... in institutions, communities, and households. Reflect: Has this illness infected you? Do you think your needs and freedoms supersede those of others? Provision: We can all be arrogant at times. Be aware when you are tempted and hold your tongue!*

Sat, Nov 27: *"Beware your hearts don't become drowsy...(lest) that day catch you by surprise like a trap." (Lk 21:34-36)*

Surprise!! Tomorrow is the first day of Advent. It catches me like a trap every year! Seems like I feel that way a lot. No, not from carousing or drunkenness, but I know the anxieties of daily life can sweep time away before I even realize it. **Today's reflection/provision:** *Make today and tomorrow a true Sabbath. Prepare your heart for the weeks ahead. Put aside the "have to do" list and look inward. Give thanks for the blessings, the graces, the trials of this past year. Gather them all to present to the Christ Child in gratitude and praise four weeks from today!*