

# *Gratitude Foundation*

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*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?  
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

**The Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year B**

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*“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”*

(1 Thess: 5:18)

# Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Reading I

### Daniel 12:1-3

In those days, I Daniel,  
heard this word of the Lord:  
"At that time there shall arise  
Michael, the great prince,  
guardian of your people;  
it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress  
since nations began until that time.  
At that time your people shall escape,  
everyone who is found written in the book.

"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake;  
some shall live forever,  
others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.

"But the wise shall shine brightly  
like the splendor of the firmament,  
and those who lead the many to justice  
shall be like the stars forever."

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

R. (1) **You are my inheritance, O Lord!**  
O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup,  
you it is who hold fast my lot.  
I set the LORD ever before me;  
with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.  
R. **You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

Therefore, my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices,  
my body, too, abides in confidence;  
because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld,  
nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.  
R. **You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

You will show me the path to life,  
fullness of joys in your presence,  
the delights at your right hand forever.  
R. **You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

## Reading II

### Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Brothers and sisters:

Every priest stands daily at his ministry,  
offering frequently those same sacrifices  
that can never take away sins.

But this one offered one sacrifice for sins,  
and took his seat forever at the right hand of God;  
now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool.

For by one offering  
he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated.

Where there is forgiveness of these,  
there is no longer offering for sin.

## Alleluia

### Luke 21:36

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Be vigilant at all times  
and pray that you have the strength to stand before the Son of Man.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

## Gospel

### Mark 13:24-32

Jesus said to his disciples:

"In those days after that tribulation  
the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light,  
and the stars will be falling from the sky,  
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

"And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds'  
with great power and glory,  
and then he will send out the angels  
and gather his elect from the four winds,  
from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

"Learn a lesson from the fig tree.

When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves,  
you know that summer is near.

In the same way, when you see these things happening,  
know that he is near, at the gates.

Amen, I say to you,  
this generation will not pass away  
until all these things have taken place.

Heaven and earth will pass away,  
but my words will not pass away.

"But of that day or hour, no one knows,  
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

# Exegesis

## Daniel 12:1-3

The *Book of Daniel* was composed sometime during the persecution of the Jewish people by Antiochus IV Epiphanes that began in the year 167 B.C. The author is unknown. The book is named after a young Jewish man who was carried off to Babylon during the beginning of the Exile and who lived in Babylon until at least 536 B.C. The story of Daniel spans the years from 606 B.C. through 536 B.C., in the third year of Persian King Cyrus. The name *Daniel* consists of two Hebrew words *daniy* (to judge) and *el* (God). The name means either *my judge is God* or *God has judged*. Although there are other scriptural references to persons named Daniel, there is no proof that they are the character of this book.

Our pericope, the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter, is referencing the tribulation of the great Hellenistic Wars. Chapters 10-12:13 include a brief history of the Persian Empire and that of Alexander the Great, and then his divided empires, i.e. Ptolemaic and Seleucid, and the chaos that followed. Chapters 10 and 11 paint a picture of earthly kingdoms rising and falling.

It is important to note that this passage is being written many years later during the persecution by Antiochus IV that began in 167 B.C. For centuries the Hellenistic Wars were reigning terror on the Egypt and the Near East. After a long line of kings of the Seleucid Dynasty, King Antiochus IV murdered the Jewish high priest, Onias III in the year 170 (see 2 Mac 4:33-35). In 167 the Jerusalem Temple was ransacked and desecrated and the great persecution of the Jews began.

Our passage today is describing this great tumult, but at a deeper level is describing a time yet to come, the great and final tribulation at the end of time.

*At that time there shall arise Michael.* Judaism ascribed protecting angels to various groups, Michael was the great protector of God's people. (See 10:13).

After a great time of distress the elect of God, those whose names are written in the Book of Life will be saved. "Him only who has sinned against Me (God) I will strike out of My Book." (Ex 32:33). "Let them (sinners) not attain your reward. Strike them from the Book of the Living; do not count them among the just!" (Ps 69:29). Please note that in both references to the Book of Life there arises a circumstance where someone is to be excluded. The inference is that all are chosen by God, but some will reject God.

*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.* Sleep is a euphemism for biological death. "Jesus said to them, 'our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him.'" (Jn 11:11). "Then he (Stephen) fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this against them'; and then he fell asleep." (Acts 7:60). "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God. through Jesus bring with Him those who have fallen asleep." (1 Thes 4:14). Those who are sleeping in the earth shall awake. In Sacred Scripture this is the earliest clear pronouncement of believe in the resurrection of the dead.

*Some shall live forever.* The original Hebrew is *lehayye olam* which is translated literally *some onto life everlasting*. Again, this is the first occurrence of this term in the bible.<sup>1</sup>

*But the wise shall shine brightly.* The *Book of Wisdom* describes the wise as those who live in right relationship with God and with others, who live with wisdom, *sophia*. It further describes the un-wise as the un-godly who do not believe that God is the giver and sustainer of life, and the author of eternal life. The wise believe that God is the ground of their being and the life breath that sustains the just in the here and now, and forever.

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1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy; The New Jerome Biblical Commentary; P.H.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; page 419.



## Exegesis (Continued)

### Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

Psalm 16 consists of 11 verses. It is entitled *God the Supreme Good*. Verses 1-4 sing of faith in Yahweh alone. It is a song of great trust in Yahweh in whom we take refuge.

My inheritance, my allotted portion and my cup is on one level the dividing up of the Promised Land to the Israelites. “He (Yahweh) brought them to His holy land, the mountain His right hand won. God drove out the nations before them, apportioned them a heritage by lot, and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.” (Ps 78:54-55). See also Joshua 8: 8-10. On another level, with the Promised Land being symbolic of our Heavenly Homeland, it could be interpreted as the place prepared for us that Jesus promises.

St. Peter quotes this Psalm in his famous speech at Pentecost. He proclaimed that David is speaking of Jesus in this Psalm. “But God raises Him (Jesus) up, releasing Him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for Him to be held by it. For David says of Him: ‘I saw the Lord ever before me, with Him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed. Therefore, my heart has been glad, and my tongue has exulted; my flesh, too, will dwell in hope, because you will not abandon my soul to the nether world, nor will you suffer your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to Me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in Your presence’” (Acts 2:24-28).

*You will show me the path of life.* The word for *path* is *orah* in the original Hebrew. It is a word that is used to describe a physical road or route, but in Scripture it is often used to describe a way of life. or a proper and Godly way of living. (See Proverbs 2:19; 5:6; 6:23; 15:24). It is a way to eternal life with God.

### Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Our pericope today ends our sequential reading from *Hebrews*. Our passage from *Hebrews* continues to stress the fact that Jesus is the final sacrifice offered once for all. Not like the high priest who entered the sanctuary once every year on the Day-of-Atonement, or the ritual priests who offered sacrifices daily, Jesus now offers His own blood for all. He is the one perfect unblemished lamb, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. *Christ offered once to take away the sins of many.* This verse echoes Isaiah 53:12: “He surrendered Himself to death and was counted among the wicked; and He shall take away the sins of many.” The Hebrew word that we translate as *many* in Isaiah is *rab*. The Semitic understanding can also mean *all*. The Greek word *anaphero* can mean either “to take away” or “to bear”. The word provides a deeper understanding of the reality described here as Jesus takes away our sins precisely in bearing our sins Himself.

*The one offering He made perfect forever.* The word that we translate as *perfect* is *teleioo* which means at its deepest level *to complete or fulfill the purpose ordained by God*. Jesus fulfills His purpose in His Passion. “It is for this reason that I came.” (Jn 17:4).

*Hebrews* reflects on the OT ritual priesthood, e.g. the priesthood of Melchizedek as a foreshadowing of the Priesthood of Christ. Chapter 7 in the NAB is entitled *Melchizedek, a Type of Christ*. The OT priesthood held the priest to be a mediator between God and the people. The priest was called to mediate the Word of God to the people and to bring the prayers and sacrifices of the people to God. The priest typically was chosen from a family lineage. The king or the leader was considered anointed by God and often served in a capacity of priest as well as ruler. All manifestations of OT ritual priesthood are merely an architype of the Great High Priest, Jesus the Christ.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Whereas the OT Priesthood served the Old Covenant, Jesus is the Priest of the New and Everlasting Covenant sealed with the blood of the Lamb of God. The OT priest entered the Holy of Holies once per year on the day of atonement to offer the animal sacrifice to God for his sins and for the sins of the people. OT priests died and were often replaced by their son(s). The priesthood of Jesus will never pass away. This is the fulfillment of the promise of Yahweh to establish from the lineage of King David (See Ps 110:4). There is only one Priest, Jesus. The priesthood of the NT of the New Covenant calls for those who are called by God and ordained to stand in Persona Christi, in the person of Christ.

Likewise, the sacrifice offered daily on the Altar of the Holy Mass is a representation of the one sacrifice offered once for all. We no longer offer sacrifices for sin; we make present again the one Sacrifice of Calvary.

### Mark 13:24-32

The scene of our Gospel passage is set in the beginning of Chapter 13: “As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple area, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will this happen...?’” (Mk 13:3-4). Jesus had just told them of the destruction of the magnificent temple. The disciples will live to see the destruction of the temple by the Romans in the year 70. Just as in our first reading from *Daniel* we are reflecting on the destruction of the temporal world. Jesus is a few short days away from His Passion, when the temple of His human body will be destroyed and will be raised on the third day.

*The sun will be darkened... the powers in the heavens will be shaken.* The description of these cosmic disturbances echo from several OT passages especially Isaiah 13:10: “The stars and constellations of the heavens send forth no light; The sun is dark when it rises, and the light of the moon does not shine.” For similar texts see Isa 34:4; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Amos 8:9 and Hag 2:6, 21. It also describes the great tribulation as described in *Daniel* Chapter 12 v.1. *Daniel* goes on to speak of the great abomination when the daily sacrifice will be no more as the temple is desecrated under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Rituals to the pagan god Baal were performed on the altar of sacrifice in the temple. The pagan god Baal was believed to be in control of the celestial powers. The Prophet Elijah proved that Yahweh was in control of the elements on Mount Carmel. The cosmic events of Good Friday also come to mind when reflecting on the great tribulation. In any event Jesus is encouraging His disciples and us to have courage and persevere when great distress comes into our lives. Because...

*And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds.* This verse echoes *Daniel* 7:13-14: “As the visions during the night continued, I saw one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven; When he reached the Ancient One and was presented before Him, He received dominion, glory and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.” Jesus reveals Himself early on in Mark’s Gospel as the Son of Man. As Jesus heals the paralytic he proclaims: “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth...” (Mk 2:10). For similar passages see Mk 2:28; 8:31, 38; 9:9; 10:33, 45; and 14:21, 41.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Mark 13:24-32

The cloud is symbolic of the presence of Yahweh. “When the priests left the holy place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord so that the priests could no longer minister because of the cloud, since the Lord’s glory had filled the temple of the Lord.” (1 Kgs 8:10-11). Ironically, the pagan god Baal was often referred to as *the cloud rider*.<sup>2</sup>

*He will send out the angels.* In Matthew 13:49-50 Jesus tells us: “Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.”

*To gather His elect from the four winds.* The elect are God’s beloved children who accept the gift of His life. The four winds represent the four directions. Throughout the OT God promises to gather the people from all directions to Himself. The people are often dispersed, and God promises to gather them to Himself, e.g., “Though you may have been driven to the farthest corner of the world, even from there will the Lord, your God, gather you; even from there He will bring you back.” (Deut 30:4). For additional passages see Isa 11:11, 16; 27:12; Ezek 39:27). Now Jesus will gather all people to Himself.

*From the end of the earth to the end of the sky.* This phrase embraces all of creation. See Deut 13:7 and Deut 30:4.

*Learn a lesson from the fig tree.* Many of the trees in the Holy Land are evergreen. The fig tree is a seasonal tree that was common in Israel. It passed through the cycles of the seasons. It became tender and began to sprout leaves in April about the time of Passover. In winter it appears to be dead and then comes to life in spring. The word that is translated as *lesson* is *parabole* in the original Greek, which is often translated as *parable*. Which literally means juxtaposition, such as placing one thing beside the other to teach a lesson.

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2. Donahue, Harrington; Sacra Pagina Series, The Gospel of Mark; L.P.; Collegeville, MN; page 374.

## Reflection

Our first reading this weekend is from the *Book of Daniel*. The *Book of Daniel* is one of the great apocalyptic books of the Bible. We often equate apocalyptic with end times or eschatological themes and rightly so. When we look at the root meaning of the Greek word *apocalyptic*, however, it literally means *to remove the veil*. From the Latin translation we get the word *revelation* as in the *Book of Revelation*, which again means *to remove the veil*. God is revealing to us a world beyond the world that we can see. God sent His only Son to remove the veil and show us a world beyond the grave.

The setting of the Gospel finds Jesus approaching His Passion. As I was praying with the readings this week the darkness of that Hour was on my heart. I could see the chaos and distress of that moment in time. The sun was darkened, and the earth shook. The readings were drawing me into that great apocalyptic event in human history, the event that changed the world forever.

From the prophet Isaiah we have the promise of God: “On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples. On this mountain He will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all nations; He will destroy death forever.” (Is 25:6) This promise is fulfilled on the Mount of Calvary on the day that we call Good Friday. At the moment that Jesus died on the Cross the temple veil was torn from top to bottom. That which once separated us from God is removed, the veil is removed, Heaven’s gate is now opened.

Through the event that we call the Paschal Mystery, the passion and death and the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we have the great unveiling of the world beyond the world that we can see. God reveals to us a world beyond this earthly life. He reveals a time when we will meet the Risen Lord face to face.

In the light of this revelation, we are called to live life in a certain way, to live always prepared for this encounter. If we live as a prudent and vigilant steward, then we should not be overly concerned about the time or the hour of this encounter. It makes little difference to the prepared person whether the world ends tomorrow, or we pass peacefully in our sleep 30 years from now. The message is to be prepared always. I think that this is what St. Paul means when he talks about persevering in faith.

As we move now toward the end of the Liturgical Year of the Church, we will be continually encouraged to be ready and vigilant. We will be challenged to face our own mortality. Out of love for us Jesus wants us to live in right relationship with him always. Jesus wants us to live connected to the free flow of His abiding love. He wants to spend eternity with each one of us. God wants us to know this. This is the great unveiling that we celebrate this weekend. Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of us Your faithful, and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ’s Love,





## Personal Witness

In my prior life as a Certified Public Accountant I dedicated a significant amount of my time working on estate planning. In those days there were significantly lower federal estate tax thresholds and in my state, there was an inheritance tax. It was important for most of my clients to do some planning to minimize estate and inheritance taxes for the surviving spouse and for the family. I found it interesting how everyone wanted to save taxes, and no one wanted to talk about death. They would typically say things such as, "If something happens to Mary first then Tom should do this," or "If something happens to Tom then this should happen." I would typically respond, "If Mary dies first or when Tom dies then this should occur." It is not just something that happens, it is death. It is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when.

In my priesthood I was also constantly reminded that no one wants to talk about or deal with death. More and more it seems people want to bury it quickly. No pun intended. Funeral events have become shorter and shorter. Everyone wants to get it over with and not deal with it. Let's do it all in one morning, wake and funeral Mass or funeral service over and done in two hours or less. Then let's move on quickly.

I was blessed not to have to experience family death in my childhood. All my grandparents lived to old age. I was a pallbearer for a close friend who died of cancer one year after high school which was my first real encounter with death. He was a young man of great faith, and I was certain that he was in a better place.

The day after I celebrated my 28<sup>th</sup> birthday my best friend was killed in an automobile accident. He had recently been married and his wife was pregnant with their first son. He was alone in his car coming back from a men's basketball tournament, when he was struck head on by a drunk driver. There were no survivors. If not for being called to a business meeting out of town, I would have been in that car with him. That deep loss really caused me to pause and reflect on his life and on my own. My friend was a good person and a baptized Christian, but he was not active in his faith. I still wonder if he was in right relationship with God.

After a time of grieving, I began to wonder about my own relationship with God and my own readiness to meet him. I never really abandoned my faith, but I was really going through the motions, attending Mass on Sunday's and Holy Days. I had become a minimalist. I was relegating God to one hour per week and the rest of time God was not a conscious part of my world. I turned toward God and actively began to seek Him out, searching for answers and consolation. I discovered that seeking is finding. I realized that God was there all the time, but I was not there, I was not conscious of His presence. It was a decisive moment in my life that rekindled my personal friendship with Jesus that began in my early childhood.

It is precisely in this personal relationship with Jesus that I am confident and unafraid. My hope is that where He is I will also be with Him. I have learned to recommit myself to Jesus daily in prayer and contemplation. It is in this relationship that we remain vigilant and prepared for death or the Parousia whichever comes first. This also allows us to live life to the fullest here and now. St. John the beloved disciple said it all when he wrote: "God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever possess the Son has eternal life." (1 Jn 5:11-12).

