

# Gratitude Foundation

---



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

(Lk. 17:15-17)

## Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year C

---

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret  
Executive Director

[www.gratitudefoundation.us](http://www.gratitudefoundation.us)  
[frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us](mailto:frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us)

3713 County 416 20th Road  
Gladstone, MI 49837

*“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—Year C

## Reading 1

### Malachi 3:19-20a

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,  
when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble,  
and the day that is coming will set them on fire,  
leaving them neither root nor branch,  
says the LORD of hosts.  
But for you who fear my name, there will arise  
the sun of justice with its healing rays.

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

R. (cf. 9) **The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.**  
Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and melodious song.  
With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.  
R. **The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.**

Let the sea and what fills it resound,  
the world and those who dwell in it;  
let the rivers clap their hands,  
the mountains shout with them for joy.  
R. **The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.**

Before the LORD, for he comes,  
for he comes to rule the earth,  
he will rule the world with justice  
and the peoples with equity.  
R. **The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.**

## **Reading 2**

### **2 Thessalonians 3:7-12**

Brothers and sisters:

You know how one must imitate us.

For we did not act in a disorderly way among you,  
nor did we eat food received free from anyone.

On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day  
we worked, so as not to burden any of you.

Not that we do not have the right.

Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you,  
so that you might imitate us.

In fact, when we were with you,  
we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work,  
neither should that one eat.

We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a  
disorderly way,

by not keeping busy but minding the business of others.

Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly  
and to eat their own food.

## **Alleluia**

### **Luke 21:28**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Stand erect and raise your heads  
because your redemption is at hand.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

# Gospel

## Luke 21:5-19

While some people were speaking about  
how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings,  
Jesus said, "All that you see here--  
the days will come when there will not be left  
a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."

Then they asked him,  
"Teacher, when will this happen?  
And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?"  
He answered,  
"See that you not be deceived,  
for many will come in my name, saying,  
'I am he,' and 'The time has come.'  
Do not follow them!  
When you hear of wars and insurrections,  
do not be terrified; for such things must happen first,  
but it will not immediately be the end."  
Then he said to them,  
"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.  
There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues  
from place to place;  
and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.

"Before all this happens, however,  
they will seize and persecute you,  
they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons,  
and they will have you led before kings and governors  
because of my name.  
It will lead to your giving testimony.  
Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand,  
for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking  
that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute.  
You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends,  
and they will put some of you to death.  
You will be hated by all because of my name,  
but not a hair on your head will be destroyed.  
By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

# Exegesis

## Malachi 3:19-20a

The Prophet that we have come to know as Malachi lived during the time of the Restoration, the time that immediately followed the Babylonian Exile. The Israelite people were busy undertaking the arduous task of rebuilding their temple, their city and their lives. Experts date the promulgation of *Malachi* approximately 455 B.C.E., immediately preceding Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem.

Most scholars seem to agree that Malachi was not the Prophet's real name. The Hebrew word *malachi* simply means *my messenger*. The thought is that because the prophet was so critical of the infidelity of the people and especially his sharp critique relative to the short comings of the priests and rulers of the people, that the Prophet used the anonymous pseudo name Malachi.

The *Book of Malachi* begins, "An oracle. The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi." (Ma 1:1). The Prophet reveals himself as God's messenger. His real name is not important. He is simply a mouthpiece for Yahweh.

The first two chapters set the stage for Chapter 3. They are strong indictments of the priests, the rulers, and the people. The priests are accused of offering polluted food on the altar of Yahweh. (See Ma 1:6.). Relative to the infidelity of the people the Prophet chides, "Why then do we break faith with each other, violating the covenant of our fathers? Judah had broken faith; an abdominal thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. Judah has profaned the temple which the Lord loves and has married an idolatrous woman." (Ma 2:11).

It is important to keep in mind the prophecy of Ezekiel who was carried off into Babylon with the Exiles shortly prior to this time. Again, it was thought to be the infidelity of the people, the priests and the rulers that caused this great calamity and the destruction of the temple and their city. Ezekiel has a vision of the Glory of God leaving the temple. It was in the year 592 B.C. "Then the glory of the Lord left the threshold of the temple and rested upon the cherubim... And the glory of the Lord rose from the city and took a stand on the mountain which is to the east of the city." (Ez 10:18, 23). The glory of God was seen to rise from the temple via the Mount of Olives.

Now the Prophet, who calls himself Malachi, during this period of Restoration, reveals a promise of Yahweh to return to His Temple. "And suddenly there will come to the temple the Lord whom you seek, and the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Yes, He is coming says the Lord of hosts." (Ma 3:1).

In the following verses, i.e., vs 2 and 4, the Prophet Malachi uses the analogy of the refiner's fire refining and purifying silver. As metal is heated to very high temperatures the impurities are burned off and then as the metal cools the molecules realign without the impurities that once separated them and the metal becomes stronger, i.e. tempered. As enumerated in the first two chapters, the Prophet sees a need for purification. In the presence of the Yahweh there will be a purification. There is a need that we too burn off the darkness and sin that weakens and corrupts. The process is most often painful but like tempered metal the people will emerge stronger and more faithful.

Our pericope today is taken from a section that is titled in the ESV *The Great Day of the Lord*. It begins by carrying forward the image of the refining and purifying fire. *Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the LORD of hosts*. The Prophet Isaiah describes this event as follows: "Lo, they are like stubble, fire consumes them; they cannot save themselves from the spreading flames." (Is 47: 14). St. Paul describes it thus: "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with His mighty angels, in blazing fire, inflicting punishment on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal ruin, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thes 1: 7-9).

*But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *fear* in this verse is *yirah*. *Yirah* can be used to describe a craven fear, but most often in reference to our relationship with God in means to revere or be in a state of awe before Him. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *justice* is *sedaquah*. *Sedaquah* is sometimes translated as *righteousness* and can also mean *faithfulness*. When speaking of the rise of the righteous (*sedaquah*) shoot of David, the Prophet Jeremiah writes: "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up a righteous (*sedaquah*) shoot of David; as King He shall reign and govern wisely, He shall do what is just and right (*sedaquah*) in the land. In His days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give Him: 'The Lord our justice (*sedaq*).'" (Jer 23: 5-6).

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

Psalm 98 consists of nine verses. It is titled *The Coming of God* in the NAB and *Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord* in the ESV. Psalm 98 is referred to as an enthronement psalm that was used in synagogue liturgies. It is calling the people to gratitude and praise for the saving deeds of Yahweh. It includes the call for all humanity to join in joyful worship and for all creation to acknowledge Yahweh's rule.<sup>1</sup> The saving power of God is clear for all to see throughout history, and it elicits our response.

*Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm.* This verse begins by echoing Psalm 33:3. "Sing to God a new song; skillfully play with joyful chant." (Ps 33: 3). The Hebrew word translated as *Lord* in these verses is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *new song* in these verses is *hadas shir*. *Hadas* means new or fresh, a new creation or composition. *Shir* suggests a joyful song of praise and worship. The second part of this verse references Psalm 96 and Exodus 15. "Tell God's glory among the nations; among all peoples, God's marvelous deeds." (Ps 96: 3). "Your right hand, O Lord, magnificent in power, Your right hand, O Lord, has shattered the enemy." (Ex 15: 6).

*Sing praise to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and melodious song. With trumpets and the sound of the horn sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.* The Hebrew word that is translated as *LORD* in this verse and throughout the psalm is *Yahweh*. In a similar way *Deutero-Isaiah* calls on the people to burst into song, praising the goodness of the LORD in anticipation of their delivery from the bondage of the Exile. "Yes, the Lord shall comfort Zion and have pity on all her ruins; her deserts He shall make like Eden, her wasteland like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of song." (Is 51: 3). Psalm 66 likewise calls for the people to burst into joyful songs. "Shout joyfully to God, all you on earth; sing to His glorious name; give Him glorious praise." (Ps 66: 1). Several scripture passages refer to the use of trumpets in the worship and praise of the Lord. "On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I am the LORD your God." (Num 10: 10). (See also 1 Chr 15:24; 2 Chr 15: 14).

*Let the sea and what fills it resound, the world and those who dwell in it; let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains shout with them for joy.* *Deutero-Isaiah* again calls creation to burst into song in anticipation of God's saving hand setting the people free from Babylon. "Yes, in joy you shall depart, in peace you shall be brought back; mountains and hills shall break out in song before you, and all the trees of the countryside shall clap their hands." (Is 55: 12). (See also Ps 96:11; Ps 24: 1; Ps 93: 3; Ps 89: 12).

*Before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to rule the earth, he will rule the world with justice and the peoples with equity.* The Hebrew word translated here as *justice* is *sedaq*. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse as *equity* is *mesarim*. *Mesarim* means *fairness* and *uprightness*, but also *peace* and *friendship*. Both of these words describe positive attributes of the Lord. (See above). This psalm echoes Psalm 96. "Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and what fills it resound; let the plains be joyful and all that is in them. Then let all the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord who comes, who comes to govern the earth, to govern the world with justice and the peoples with faithfulness. (Ps 96: 11-13). The Psalmist is calling on all of creation to burst into joyful song and praise to the Lord not only for His *hesed* love and *emuna* faithfulness (verse 3), but also for the Lord's *sedaq* justice and *mesarim* equity (verse 9). (See also Isaiah 11: 1-9 *The Rule of Immanuel*).

---

1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy; The New Jerome Biblical Commentary; P.H.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; page 543.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Thessalonica is a port city in Macedonia that was founded in 315 B.C. by one of Alexander the Great's military generals, Cassander. He named the city after his wife Thessalonica, who happened to be the sister of Alexander the Great. It was captured in 168 B.C. by the Romans, and it became the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. As a busy port city on the Egnatian Way it was very much a bustling cosmopolitan city. At the time of Paul there was a Jewish presence in the city with at least one synagogue. (See Acts 17: 1-2). Paul visited Thessalonica during his second missionary journey, ca. 50. Although scholars almost universally agree that *1 Thessalonians* is an authentic Pauline letter, most agree that *2 Thessalonians* was written in Paul's name by a pseudonymous author.

The letter addresses a false claim circulating in the community that the Parousia is imminent. "We ask you, brothers, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with Him, not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or be alarmed either by a "spirit" or an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand." (2 Thes 2: 1-2). Such a false understanding would encourage the believers to stop what they are doing and wait in full anticipation.

Our pericope is taken from a section near the end of the letter that is titled *Neglect of Work* in the NAB and *Warning Against Idleness* in the ESV. The section begins with the immediately preceding verse to our selected passage. "We instruct you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to shun any brother who conducts himself in a disorderly way and not according to the tradition they received from us." (2 Thes 3: 6). As this introductory sentence "sets the stage" for what follows, it needs to be addressed. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *disorderly* is *ataktos*. The ESV translates *ataktos* as *idleness* in support of the texts that follow. Whereas *ataktos* can be used to describe *idleness and laziness*, it literally means *not in battle-order*. Its first level of meaning describes *irresponsibility or disorderliness*. The author uses this adjective in the following verse to describe how they (Paul and companions) did not act when they were with them. "Brothers and sisters: You know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone." (2 Thes 3: 7). The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *disorderly* is again *ataktos*. This would seem to contrast those *disorderly* who are promoting a false narrative in both their words and actions.

*On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you.* In *1 Thessalonians* Paul had previously reminded the community of their example. "You recall, brothers, our toil and drudgery. Working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God." (1 Thes 2: 9).

*We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others.* The Greek word translated as *disorderly way* is again *ataktos*. The Greek word that is translated here as *business of others* is *periergazomai*. *Periergazomai* is translated as *busybody* in the ESV. It means to be a *meddler* or to be *overly concerned with the affairs of others*. Paul uses this expression in his *First Letter to Timothy*. "And furthermore, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers but gossips and busybodies (*periergazomai*) as well, talking about things that ought not to be mentioned." (1 Tim 5: 13).

*Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.* In his first letter to the community Paul went so far as to encourage the community to fraternally correct those who are idle among them. "We urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient with all." (1 Thes 5: 14).

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Luke 21:5-19

The setting of our Gospel passage today from Luke has been, for several weeks in our Ordinary Time Sunday Lectionary, Jesus on His way to Jerusalem to endure His Passion; and He is teaching and healing, addressing both the crowds and His disciples along the journey. It is now apparent that they have arrived at their destination, and His teachings turn toward an eschatological theme.

*While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here--the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."* It is apparent that they have arrived in Jerusalem. In Mark's account of this event, they are on the slopes of Mt. Olivet looking down on the temple. "As they were sitting on the Mount of Olives, opposite the temple area, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will this happen, and what sign will there be when all these things are about to come to an end?" (Mk 13: 3-4). King Herod took great pride in the reconstruction of the temple that Jesus and His disciples are now gazing upon. The Roman historian Josephus gives us a very vivid and detailed description of the temple in *Antiquities, Book 15, Chapter 11*. The description is breathtaking, and I would encourage everyone to read it. What follows is a brief sample of the historian describing the temple doors:

"The temple had doors also at the entrance, and lintels over them, of the same height with the temple itself. They were adorned with embroidered veils, with their flowers of purple, and pillars interwoven: (395) and over these, but under the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the largeness and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials there were, and with what great skill the workmanship was done."<sup>2</sup>

*2 Maccabees* describe the restoration of the sacred vessels of the temple by King Antiochus. "He would adorn with the finest offerings of the holy temple which he had previously despoiled; he would restore all the sacred vessels many times over; and would provide from his own revenues the expenses required for the sacrifices." (2 Mac 9: 16). All of this will be destroyed by the Romans in a few years, ca. 70 B.C. The destruction of Jerusalem that coincided with the destruction of the temple was prophesied by the Prophet Micah. "Therefore, because of you (the unfaithful), Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem reduced to rubble, and the mount of the temple a forest ridge." (Mic 3: 12).

*Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?"* In this discourse with Jesus, He is talking of three significant future events in time, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the time of great persecution, and the coming of the Son of Man. Jesus had recently used the destruction of the temple as a metaphor for His own Passion, and now it appears that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the great persecution are a paradigm of the coming of the Son of Man. This entails the finitude of temporal corporeal reality (the Jerusalem temple) and the restoration of the soul in God (the temple of the Body of Christ).

*He answered, "See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them!* Both the Prophet Jeremiah and the Disciple John warned of these false prophets. "Lies these prophets utter in My name, the Lord said to me. I did not send them; I gave them no command, nor did I speak to them. Lying visions, foolish divination, dreams of their own imagination, they prophesy to you." (Jer 14: 14). "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists have appeared." (1 Jn 2: 18).

---

2. Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, [\*The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged\*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 424.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Luke 21:5-19

*When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky. The Greek word that is translated in this verse as terrified is ptoeo. In their account of this discourse of Jesus, both Mark and Matthew use the Greek word throeomai, which mean to be troubled. Ptoeo is much stronger, it means to be terrified or struck with panic. Ptoeo appears twice in the LXX, first to describe the great theophany on Mt. Sinai. "The smoke rose from it as though from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently (ptoeo)." (Ex 19: 18). The second account is when Joshua is about to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. "Be brave and steadfast; have no fear or dread (ptoeo) of them, for it is the Lord, your God who marches with you; He will never fail you or forsake you." (Deut 31: 6). A great earthquake is to proceed the Day of the Lord. (See Zech 14: 5). The Book of Revelation points to the role of Jesus to reveal what must happen first/soon. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him, to show His servants what must happen soon." (Rev 1: 1).*

*It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. "Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." (Ex 4: 12).*

*"By your perseverance you will secure your lives." The Greek word that is translated as perseverance in this verse is hypomone. Hypomone is translated as endurance in the ESV. Hypomone describes steadfast endurance. It is commonly translated as endurance in other NT passages. "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance (hypomone), and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom 5: 3-5). "For you have need of endurance (hypomone), so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised." (Heb 10: 36). The Greek word that is translated in this verse as lives is psyche. Psyche, while it can refer to life it is most often translated as soul in Sacred Scripture. It is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word nepes. Nepes is the receptor of divine life in the creation story of Genesis. "Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (hay nepes)." (Gen 2: 7).*

## Reflection

As we move toward the end of the liturgical year the Church puts before us what is referred to as apocalyptic themes and biblical texts to support that theme. We often equate apocalyptic writings with the revelation of and contemplation of the end times. The word *apocalyptic* however means literally to *remove the veil*. Similarly, the word *revelation* comes from the Latin word which means to *remove the veil*. By removing the veil God wants us to see what lies ahead. God wants us to see where we are going and what is important to get us there.

In our Gospel Jesus in entering the Holy City of Jerusalem heading toward His Passion and Death, His Resurrection and Ascension. Jesus, Peter and John have just experienced the Transfiguration. On the mount of the Transfiguration the veil was removed so that they could see into eternity. They were given a glimpse into the afterlife, into the world beyond the world that we can see right now. Jesus knows what lies ahead and He wants us to know also what He knows and what our souls long to see once again.

As they enter the city the followers of Jesus are admiring the great temple, one of the wonders of the ancient world. The great edifice of stone and mortar seemed so strong and permanent surrounded by a wall of stone. It was a fortress built to stand impenetrably against enemy invasion and the most powerful storm this world could unleash. It took 47 years to build. Jesus informs them that a day will come when not one stone will remain upon another. The prophecy was fulfilled in the year 70. The magnificent temple, the fortress walls and the entire city would lie in ruins, leaving a pile of rubble.

In this example Jesus is reminding us that this world and things of this world are passing away. If we build our lives on the foundation of this world, we are like the fool who built his house on sand. The storms will come, and the house will be washed away. We are challenged to build our lives on rock, the Rock that is Christ. He must be the cornerstone of our foundation. As the world passes, He remains constant. He is the eternal Rock who always was and always will be. The entirety of our lives must be built on the foundation of our faith.

The removal of the veil that clouds our view of eternal life should fill us with great joy and enduring hope. It is comforting to know what God has prepared for those who love Him. St. Paul reminds us that “eye has not seen, and ear has not heard what God has prepared for those who love Him.” If we are living in right relationship with God, the end times should fill us with joy and not fear.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".

## Personal Witness

In my prior life as a CPA I did a fair amount of estate planning as a part of my practice. It was always particularly interesting to sit down with married couples as they planned out their estate. Invariably the conversation would go something like this: Mary would say, “If something happens to Bob, I think that this or that should occur.” I would always find myself intentionally changing the language of the conversation. I would always change the wording from “if” to “when”. I would remind them of the saying, “only two things are certain in life – death and taxes.” We would then plan to minimize the estate and inheritance taxes and plan for the inevitability of death.

In my priesthood it seems that I am constantly reminded that no one wants to talk about or deal with death. More and more people want to bury death 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, let’s get the 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 an 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 (*aiônios zoe*), and this life is in His Son. Whoever possesses the Son has eternal life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life.” (1 Jn 5:11-12).

