



# Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (A)  
November 22, 2020

## Actions Matter

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Michelangelo’s amazing painting, *The Last Judgment*, takes up the whole of one wall of the Sistine Chapel. It 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. +

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## A Word from Pope Francis

The kingdoms of this world at times are sustained by arrogance, rivalries, and oppression; the reign of Christ is a “kingdom of justice, love and peace.” For a Christian, speaking of power and strength means referring to the power of the cross, and the strength of Jesus’ love: a love which remains steadfast and complete.

—Angelus, Solemnity of Christ the King, November 22, 2015



## Sunday Readings

### Ezekiel 34:11–12, 15–17

I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest— oracle of the Lord GOD.

### Corinthians 15:20–26, 28

The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

### Matthew 25:31–46

[Jesus said,] “And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



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

# Shaped by the Cross

By Johan van Parys

Every night before going to bed, my parents would make the sign of the cross on each child's forehead and whisper, "May God bless you and keep you." Then we would go to our bedrooms, dip our fingers in the small holy water font, and sign ourselves. I remember asking my parents for their blessing before going on a trip or asking the abbot for his blessing before leaving the abbey. These simple signs have left a lasting impression on me.

The cross was everywhere when I was growing up; even today, we find the cross hanging in churches, schools, homes, offices, and cars and around our necks. The priest blesses people with the sign of the cross. Children are marked at their baptism and adults during the Order of Catechumens with the sign of the cross. Christians are shaped by the cross.

## ***We should always remember the importance of the cross in our Christian journey.***

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Christiane Brusselmans, the first woman to earn a doctorate in theology from the Catholic University of Louvain, experimented with an ancient process used to bring adults and families into the Church. Following the Second Vatican Council, her work and that of many others resulted in reinstitution of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)—rites lost during the early



Middle Ages due to the shift from adult to infant baptism.

One remarkable rite that marks this process is the Rite of Welcome, in which we admit those seeking baptism in the Catholic Church to the Order of Catechumens. The most moving moment is when the sign of the cross is drawn on the seekers' heart, hands, feet, and shoulders. I remember her instructing us to use big gestures to ensure recipients felt the weight of the cross, especially on their shoulders. The weight of the cross can indeed be heavy.

Our lives as Christians ought to be modeled after the cross. Each year, tens of thousands of people prepare themselves to join the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. They stand in a long

tradition rooted in New Testament times. Those who have been baptized in other Christian denominations celebrate the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist. Those not previously baptized celebrate all three sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

The sacrament of baptism relates the images of baptismal bath, baptismal burial, and baptismal birth. First, we are washed clean from everything that prevents perfect union with God, who claims us as an adopted child. Second, we are buried with Christ so we may rise with him on the last day. Third, we are birthed into the Church—the Body of Christ. Because of this rich sacramental symbolism, baptismal fonts are sometimes made in the shape of a cross. Catechumens enter on one side to be baptized and exit on the other side.

We should always remember the importance of the cross in our Christian journey. Without explanation, my parents impressed this on me each time they signed me with the cross. +



*Lord, I am grateful that you are my gentle shepherd. Show me how to care for your people with the same love and compassion you show me.*

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

November 23–28

**Monday, Weekday:**  
Rv 14:1–3, 4b–5 / Lk 21:1–4

**Tuesday, St. Andrew Dŭng-Lac and Companion:** Rv 14:14–19 / Lk 21:5–11

**Wednesday, Weekday:**  
Rv 15:1–4 / Lk 21:12–19

**Thursday, Weekday:** Rv 18:1–2, 21–23; 19:1–3, 9a / Lk 21:20–28

**Friday, Weekday:**  
Rv 20:1–4, 11–21:2 / Lk 21:29–33

**Saturday, Weekday:**  
Rv 22:1–7 / Lk 21:34–36