

Sunday Readings

19th November 2023

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of Proverbs

31:10-13,19-20,30-31

A perfect wife – who can find her? She is far beyond the price of pearls.

Her husband's heart has confidence in her, from her he will derive no little profit.

Advantage and not hurt she brings him all the days of her life.

She is always busy with wool and with flax, she does her work with eager hands.

She sets her hands to the distaff, her fingers grasp the spindle.

She holds out her hand to the poor, she opens her arms to the needy.

Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty; the woman who is wise is the one to praise.

Give her a share in what her hands have worked for, and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 127:1-5. R/. v.1

R/. O blessed are those who fear the Lord.

O blessed are those who fear the Lord
and walk in his ways!

By the labour of your hands you shall eat.
You will be happy and prosper. **R/.**

Your wife like a fruitful vine
in the heart of your house;
your children like shoots of the olive,
around your table. **R/.**

Indeed thus shall be blessed
the man who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion
all the days of your life! **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

5:1-6

You will not be expecting us to write anything to you, brothers, about 'times and seasons', since you know very well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, 'How quiet and peaceful it is' that the worst suddenly happens, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman; and there will be no way for anybody to evade it.

But it is not as if you live in the dark, my brothers, for that Day to overtake you like a thief. No, you are all sons of light and sons of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel Acclamation

Rv 2:10

Alleluia, alleluia!

Even if you have to die, says the Lord,
keep faithful, and I will give you
the crown of life.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 25: 14-30

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of Heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out.

'The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

'Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made."

'His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness."

'Next the man with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness."

'Last came forward the man who had the one talent. "Sir," said he "I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back." But his master answered him, "You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

The Gospel of the Lord,

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary Year A

The Word of God

Saints of the Week

Monday 20th November 2023

We are coming to the end of Ordinary Time and so we get advice in the readings today about how to live. The first reading, from the Book of Proverbs, is clear that a husband and wife can be great and wonderful gifts to one another. But it is not automatic! We all know that it does not always work that way.

The second reading, from the First Letter to the Thessalonians, is also clear that the end of the world, or our personal death as well, will come when we are not expecting it. We need to be prepared at all times to meet the Lord. We may think that we have years left, but God can come at any time, either to end the whole world or to take us to His Kingdom. This is a message reflected throughout all of Scripture: Be ready now! Be alert! Be prepared!

The Gospel, from Saint Matthew, repeats both of these themes as it speaks about how to use the talents given to us. We can think of human talents, but the Gospel is really about how to use the gifts of faith given to us. Whatever we are given in this life, we need to use for God's glory and for others. The Gospel keeps telling us: we are ourselves Christ present in the world. We are the hands and the love of God. We must live our faith or it is no faith.

Perhaps we do not do world-shaking actions! That should not surprise us. Yet a small act of love to another person changes the world. The smallest act of faith transforms the whole universe. We don't have to think huge. We are invited to take even the smallest steps in the direction of this God who loves us. He Himself can transform that littleness. All glory to Him forever.

Prayer of the Week

A Prayer for the Departed

God our Father,
Your power brings us to birth,
Your providence guides our lives,
and by Your command we return to dust.
Lord, those who die still live in Your presence,
their lives change but do not end.
I pray in hope for my family,
relatives and friends,
and for all the dead known to You alone.
In company with Christ,
Who died and now lives,
may they rejoice in Your kingdom,
where all our tears are wiped away.
Unite us together again in one family,
to sing Your praise forever and ever.

Amen.

Saint Edmund (d.869)



He was king of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of East Anglia, covering modern Suffolk, Norfolk, and part of Lincolnshire. Very little documentary evidence for the details of his life exists, but it is known that Edmund was captured and killed by the Danish Great Heathen Army, which invaded England in 869, and the tradition is that he died

the death of a Christian martyr.

Edmund's body was buried in a wooden chapel near to where he was killed, but was later transferred to Beadriceworth, where in 925 Athelstan founded a community devoted to the new cult. Thirty years after Edmund's death, he was venerated by the Vikings of East Anglia, who produced a coinage to commemorate him.

In the 11th century a stone church was built at Bury, and Edmund's remains were translated to it. The shrine at Bury St Edmunds became one of the greatest pilgrimage locations in England.

Wednesday 22nd November 2023

St Cecilia

Devotion to St Cecilia, in whose honour a basilica was constructed in Rome in the fifth century, has spread far and wide because of the *Passion of Saint Cecilia*, which holds her up as a perfect example of a Christian woman, who embraced virginity and suffered martyrdom for the love of Christ.

As with early martyrs, nothing much is known about Cecilia except her existence and her name; with the additional complication that so many stories have grown up round her that any remaining historical facts are obscured. No-one knows quite why she should suddenly have become popular in the middle of the sixth century, some 200 years after her death, and her association with music is also a mystery. It may be real, or it may come from the description in the *Passion* of Cecilia singing to God "in her heart" while the musicians were playing on her wedding day, or it may come from a linguistic confusion: where the *Passion* describes her being stifled to death *candentibus organis*, "with the pipes glowing red-hot," this could have been misread as *cantantibus organis*, "with the organ playing."