

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 3, 2024



Which is the first of all the commandments? And the second?

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

Holyday Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

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MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday November 2 *Vigil of the 31st Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm +Earl McGrath—15th anniversary

Sunday, November 3 *Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time - National Vocations Awareness Week*

7:30am +Jill Killeen

4:00pm In gratitude to God for a favor requested and granted

Monday, November 4 *Saint Charles Borromeo, bishop*¹

12:00nn +Pat Macomber

Tuesday, November 5

12:00nn To become a praise of glory to the Trinity that dwells within

Wednesday, November 6

12:00nn +Father Louis J. Gould—by SVH Pastoral Care Department

Thursday, November 7

12:00nn +Sean R. Horrigan

Friday, November 8

12:00nn +James Flynn — Month's Mind — by his wife

Saturday, November 9 *Vigil of 32nd Sunday of the Liturgical Year*

4:00pm +Bridget Anne Wetmore

Sunday, November 10 *Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am Asking God to safeguard women in need of prenatal care

4:00pm +Piera Ceste

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. Solemnities honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. Feasts must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. Memorials are of two types: Either the observance is an obligatory memorial¹ or an optional memorial².*

Toward a Better Understanding of the Gospels during Ordinary Time

There were several other occasions, when one of the scribes or a Pharisee approached Jesus and tried to trap Him. Apparently, having overheard those exchanges, in today's Gospel, another scribe, without any hidden agenda, asks Jesus this legitimate question, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" The candid nature of the resulting exchange reveals an agreeable tone that invites those who are listeners to ponder the matter, as well. Asking that question, though, is not an indication of a negative form of casuistry that usually entails quibbling or the evasion of duty in regard to resolving moral dilemmas. In legal matters (or jurisprudence), casuistic thinking creates a hierarchy among various duties and, then, defines principles to assess the relative importance of each duty—the more important duty will be taken seriously whereas lesser duties will command significantly less attention. So, asking about the first of the commandments, the scribe wants Jesus to determine which duty is of capital (or first-order) importance? If discovered and agreed upon, the principle at the top of the hierarchy would be universally binding and the other descending principles, while not being ignored, become more or less optional. This highest duty is not the first entry found at the top of a list of commandments, as the greatest good; better than that, it becomes the source of all others, even duties that were not listed. The casuistic method extracts the essential elements of that *summum bonum* and in the sundry, novel or unique circumstances that were not anticipated, proposed action would be analyzed by reapplying those sound rules in order to either inspire or delineate concrete behavior. Having situated the matter within its moral or legal context, you can better appreciate how vital it would be to know which commandment is first among all the others. Unlike a lawyer, Jesus does not cite precedent or the code of law; instead, He recites the most well-known of Jewish prayers the *Sh'ma Yisrael*: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The prayer is a direct citation from the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:4-5) and the implications of the Shema illustrate the deepening of the faith of the Israelites in the God of Israel, when compared to the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments. The list of what must not be done includes the prohibition against worshipping other gods and no graven images (Dt 5:6-9; Ex 20:2-5a). The growing theological maturity of Judaism resulted in the realization of Yahweh's unheard of grandeur, so that not only is

St. Vincent de Paul—Letter to St. Louise de Marillac

It will be good to train the retreatants of your house to enter into detail; all else is only a product of the mind which, having found some sweetness in the meditation on a virtue, flatteringly thinks itself to be quite virtuous. However, to become solidly virtuous, one must make good practical resolutions concerning particular acts of virtue and be faithful in accomplishing them.

Lacking this, one only imagines oneself to be virtuous.

the worship of God required, though without denying the existence of other gods (i.e., monolatry), the God of Israel is the only God or The One Alone. By calling God The One, monolatry is no longer tolerating other gods, whereas it creates a strict monotheism that requires belief in only One God. When capital letters are used, the term One is no longer an adjective but becomes a proper Name befitting God and God alone! The exodus experience – being freed from slavery and, afterwards, experiencing Exile in Babylon supplied the evidence necessary to realize that the other gods were not divinities. Yahweh had entered into a covenant with those exiled and wandering in the desert through His own initiative and choice, "...the Lord loved you and because of his fidelity to the oath he swore...that he brought you out..." (Dt 7:8). This divine selection and covenant created a bond between the all-powerful God and "the smallest of peoples" (Dt 7:7) that was as unbreakable and as intimate as the conjugal bond of marriage – reciprocal, never failing, exclusive and total. Then, Jesus adds a second element, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Once again, there is a subtle reference to the Mosaic Law – in the Book of Leviticus, there is a passage on how to treat fellow Israelites (Lev 19:17-18) and, so, the term neighbor and its demands only encompassed those so designated. Later, neighbor was broadened to include aliens residing with the Israelites who were placed on the same footing (Lev 19:33-34). Because Jesus did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it, He broadened the notion of neighbor to include every human being without any distinction. The duty to love your neighbor is a corollary from the bond that the God of Israel created with that first covenant. When the prospect of salvation became universally available, the scope of who was incorporated into the command to love your neighbor broadened as well. Thus, with Christ, all human beings are equal in dignity, regardless of race, culture, or even religion. After describing the two parts of the one great Commandment which is the first of all others, the scribe notes that doing so "is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." Professing such faith in Christ and, then, putting into practice what you profess to believe results in a similar declaration for us that Jesus gave to the scribe, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." The love of neighbor cannot become visible by merely having good feelings toward others or benevolent thoughts that are only theoretical intentions; no, love of God and love for neighbor must be made concrete in deeds done that incorporate the love that we profess to have.

End of the Beginning or Beginning of the End

The last Sunday of the Liturgical Year – *Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe* – highlights hope and some of the four themes of eschatology or the last things: immortality of the soul, rebirth, resurrection, migration of the soul and the end of time. Honoring Christ as King is in harmony with the eschatological theme: "[W]e journey toward the consummation of human history, one which fully accords with the counsel of God's love: "To sum up all things in Christ, in the heaven and on the earth" (Eph. 1:10). The Lord Himself speaks: "Behold I come quickly! And my reward is with me, to render to each one according to his works. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:12-13)." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 45). The end of the year emphasis on various end time characteristics and to highlight Christ's dominion. Eschatological emphases overflow into the first two weeks of Advent. During that beginning of the new liturgical year, there is the opportunity for self-examination and renewal in order to properly prepare for Christ's two-fold coming: 1) remembrance of His first coming as an infant at Christmas and 2) His Second Coming and the Final Judgment. As the longest part of the Year of Grace, Ordinary Time has Christ the King, then, as its crowning moment. In his 1925 encyclical *Quas primas*, Pope Pius XI instituted this feast as a response to the ever-increasing secularization and global instability. It was intended to serve as a perpetual reminder of the need for submission to the true King and Lord, Jesus Christ, and emphasizing citizenship in that kingdom. This feast day was also to remind the Church that peace is ultimately and only found in obedience to Christ within the realm of His reign. For revisionists, contemporary men and women who believe that they were born without any fault, without an old nature that desperately needs the saving and sanctifying grace of God, there is no need for a King to whom they must submit their will, desire, or impulses; nor is there any need for a divine realm in which all humanity is called to live the cruciform life. Thinking like that, eliminates sin and its epistemic consequences as mere psychological problems solved with a good therapist. Viva Christo rey! Long live, Christ the King.

Excerpted from www.catholicculture.org. Jennifer Gregory Miller. "The End and the Beginning: The Cycle of the Liturgical Year. 26 November 2013.

Eschatology Understood as Mirror & Lamp

Among the Four Last Things (Lat. *quattuor novissima*), the topic of death is both menacing and merciful. When understood as the cessation of the bodily functions of a human being, death entails the departure of the soul from the body. When referring to death as one of the Four Last Things, the focus is not only on bodily death. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in death, God calls us to Himself (CCC, n. 1011) and that because of Christ and despite the innate fear of death, the faithful must cultivate its positive meaning. The Church teaches that death is a consequence of Adam's sin as declared by Saint Paul, who in the Letter to the Romans wrote, "Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death" (Rom 5:12). In the case of those who are justified by grace, death loses its penal character and, instead, becomes sin's consequence. Then, when writing to the Church in Corinth, Paul reminds the faithful that the "last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor 15:26). Yet, what is often not mentioned is that death is also a remedy for sin, for after death we will sin no more. All human beings are subject to death – although in the case of Jesus and Mary, because of their freedom from sin, death was neither a punishment nor a consequence. Yet, as both Son and Mother were truly human, death was natural for them. Moreover, as the end of earthly life, death is also a test of a believer's loyalty to God because, after having died, all possibility of divine merit or demerit comes to an end. Only the body dies when separated from its principle of life, which is the soul. The Scriptures also speak of a second death (Rev. 20:6) as a reference to those souls consigned to eternal damnation, who are separated from the principle of supernatural life, which is God.

Death & the Quattuor novissima

When discussing death as one of the Four Last Things, we are talking about bodily death (as opposed to eternal death). This physical death is merely the separation of the soul from the body. While the body dies because of sickness, old age, or decay, yet the soul will continue to live. In *Phaedo* or "On the Soul," Plato has Socrates say that death is the separation of the soul and body, "Is it [death] not the separation of soul and body? And to be dead is the completion of this; when the soul exists in herself, and is released from the body and the body is released from the soul, what is this but death?" (*Phaedo* [Jowett, 1937 vol. 1]: 447 Plato believed that the soul could exist independently of the body and would continue to exist even after the body died. In *Eschatology*, Pope Benedict XVI defended Plato's distinction be-

tween the soul and body, and its use in Christian theology or at least in its theological use in regard to the intermediate state or purgatory. He argued that the soul preserves its identity from its life on earth and looks forward to a resurrected body. The late Holy Father does not accept the reading of Plato's metaphysical dualism in which the body and soul are two distinct metaphysical substances. Rather he accepts Aristotle's emendation that the soul is the form of the body and largely follows Saint Thomas Aquinas in thinking this to be the standard state for a human being. In classical eschatology, however, the crisis of death brings about the state of the exceptional. What if anything survives the trauma of death? Seen in light of the destructive phenomenon of death that puts the reality of survival in question, yet also in light of the distinction between individual and general judgment (and thus resurrection), drawn from scripture, Ratzinger argues for the intelligibility of the intermediate state in which the soul alone continues to exist even as it waits for unification with its body. If the doctrine of the intermediate state was in the medieval period a more or less consensus view, in modernity most Christians are aware of it through the *Divina commedia* in which Dante succeeds in finding an imaginative correlative for a theological construct articulated with profundity and panache in the *City of God*. And it is Dante rather than Augustine and Aquinas who is to the fore in the twentieth-century apologetics of C.S. Lewis and Dorothy Sayers, both of whom divine that unless the poverty of eschatological imagination be overcome, there is little or no chance for a theological defense of the intermediate state upon which stands all Christianly credible views of the afterlife. St. Francis de Sales. Introduction to the Devout Life wrote, "Consider the uncertainty as to the day of your death. One day your soul will quit this body—will it be in summer or winter? In town or country? By day or by night? Will it be suddenly or without warning? Will it be owing to sickness or an accident? Will you have time to make your last confession or not? Will your confessor or spiritual father be at hand or will he not? Alas, of all these things we know absolutely nothing. All we do know is that die we shall, and for the most part sooner than we expect." He then concludes, "Gather a bouquet of myrrh" (Chapter XIV, the Sixth Meditation, on Judgment).

Excerpted from www.ChurchLifeJournal.nd.edu. Cyril O'Regan. "Benedict XVI. Eschatology as Mirror and Lamp". 19 April 2021.
