Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

November 2026

The following series is free, downloadable small-group materials based on each week's Mass readings and the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group's discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minutes format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.

2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, "What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?" or "What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?" As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.

3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. **Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation.** (The booklet *A Facilitator's Guide:* is available from Emmaus Journey to provide additional practical training for leading lively and informative small-group discussions.)

4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.

5. You can either read this week's Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, **so do not feel like you need to force a connection.** However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, "How do you see that this passage ties into the theme of the readings?"

6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.

7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Second Reading and the Gospel Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.

8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the . small group environment and during Mass as you hear Scripture read and taught. **We would appreciate knowing if you are using the *Reflecting on Sunday's Readings,* and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.**

Sincerely,

Richard A. Cleveland
Info@emmausjourney.org

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY—November 1, 2026

Introduction: A common day for commemorating All Saints began during the persecution of Diocletian when the number of martyrs became so great that a separate day could not be assigned to each. But the Church, feeling that every martyr should be venerated, appointed a common day for all. This feast which began in Antioch spread to other cities and churches. Gregory III (731-741) consecrated a chapel in the Basilica of St. Peter to all the saints and fixed the anniversary for 1 November. Later Gregory IV (827-844) extended the celebration on 1 November to the entire Church.1

It is appropriate that we should remember and honor those individuals who have gone before us who modeled a life of sacrifice and holiness, and in some cases martyrdom, for it is God himself through sacred Scripture that calls them *blessed.* One of the dictionary's primary meanings of the word "blessed" is to be "held in reverence," or as one Greek word study states it "to praise and celebrate with praises." We see in the Scripture readings several words and phrases that describe and define the people whom we commemorate on All Saints Day.

- In the first reading the Apostle John describes them as martyrs; "*a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, … who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*"
- The Psalmist describes them as people of holiness; "*He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the LORD, and vindication from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.*"
- St. John includes us, ordinary Christians who are changed into Jesus' image; "*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; … it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*"

It is helpful to keep in mind that to be an *ordinary* Christian does not mean to be a nominal, lukewarm Christian but a vibrant Christian who lives his life in Christ, and one in whom Christ lives. Here is how the early Christians are described by one Apostolic Father, "They dwell in their own fatherlands, but as if sojourners in them; they share all things as citizens, and suffer all things as strangers. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is a foreign country. They marry as [do] all men, they bear children, but they do not expose their offspring. They offer free hospitality, but guard their purity. Their lot is cast 'in the flesh,' but they do not live 'after the flesh.' They pass their time upon the earth, but they have their citizenship in heaven. They obey the appointed laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men and are persecuted by all men. They are unknown and they are condemned. They are put to death and they gain life." [2]

As we commemorate those who have gone before us, may our prayer be that of the early Christian, Eusebius, "Pray for me, that God will give me both inward and outward strength so that I may not only be called a Christian but found to be one … ."3

Mershman, Francis. "All Saints' Day." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 1. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. 5 Oct. 2009 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01315a.htm>.

2 *Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition*, by Jordan Aumann, page 26.

3 Ibid.

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

1. What should be the attitudes of "servants of our God"?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 24:1-6

Second Reading — 1 John 3:1-3

2. Define what you think John meant when he said that Jesus is "pure.'

3. How should the realization that "we are God's children now," affect the way we think and live?

Gospel Reading — Matthew 5:1-12

4. Where do you see yourself in this list?

5. In which category of the people whom Jesus lists would you like to be included? Why? In which category would you most like to avoid being included?

6. What do you think this reward will be like and should it motivate us?

Reflecting On Sunday's Reading, Copyright 2026, Richard A Cleveland.. (Available through emmausjourney.org.)

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—November 8, 2026

Introduction: Wisdom: "The ability to discern inner qualities and relationships." (From *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*)

Have you ever been in a place where all light was obscured? It is disconcerting isn't it? I've experienced this disconcerting darkness on a moonless summer night, walking on an unlit Colorado dirt road. The majestic evergreens and the sandstone rock formations obscured all real and all ambient light, creating a black cavern of uncertainty. We could not see where the dirt roadside ended and the steep sides of the perilous ditch began. Consequently, progress was slow as we carefully walked feeling with our feet for the road's edge. For the person without wisdom, life is equally as perilous and confusing. As one progresses through life with the absence of wisdom, God's light on our human darkness, quickly magnifies the dangers and confusion.

By contrast the presence of God's light makes even the darkest hours light. On another occasion at 3:00 a.m. on a Colorado mountainside, some 11,000 feet in elevation, all darkness was dispelled by the large, brilliant, illuminating full moon. Though we were in the deepest hours of night's darkness, this heavenly light was so illuminating that we could have literally read a book without difficulty. This too is a good analogy about God's wisdom. When we are immersed in situations that normally would be dark and confusing, the heavenly presence of God's wisdom, dispels the darkness, and enlightens our path.

These two contrasting analogies are not an overstatement, or an over-simplification of the value of wisdom. Though wisdom doesn't enable a person to escape the difficulties and challenges of life, wisdom does enable us to make sense of the seemingly senseless, and provides enlightening direction when choices must be made. On the other hand a foolish person, one who does not avail himself of God's wisdom, suffers both confusion and the consequences of bumbling responses to life's choices, made without light.

Where does one get wisdom? It comes from dwelling in the presence of Wisdom. Saint Cyprian explains it well, "The commands of the Gospel are nothing else than God's lessons, the foundations on which to build up hope, the support for strengthening faith, the food that nourishes the heart. They are the rudder for keeping us on the right course, the protection that keeps our salvation secure. As they instruct the receptive minds of believers on earth, they lead safely to the kingdom of God."[1]

We make ourselves available to soak in, and absorb wisdom as we make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit through sacred Scripture and godly people. Insight becomes second nature, as we become "partakers of the divine nature," (2 Peter 1:3-4) and as we learn from God's truth and see life from God's perspective. St James says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him."* We simply need to develop a lifelong program of asking God for wisdom, and making ourselves available to God to be taught wisdom by the Holy Spirit. Pope John XXIII provides a good example to follow. Not only did he begin pursuing wisdom as a youth, but even at 76 years of age, he was still seeking wisdom and praying, "O Lord, we are now in the evening of our life. Give me more light as evening falls." May God find us also pursuing wisdom.

1 Saint Cyprian, in *Liturgy of the Hours,* Vol. II, page 104.

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Wisdom 6:12-16

1. Define wisdom from your perspective.

2. How could you apply to your life one or more of the suggestions for acquiring wisdom found in this passage?

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 63:2-8

Second Reading — 1Thessalonians 4:13-18

3. What wisdom does Paul share, to provide light on what is normally viewed as a dark and terrifying event?

Gospel Reading — Matthew 25:1-13

4. Where do you see yourself in this parable?

5. What are the attitudes that underlie the maidens' behavior?

6. What lesson(s) does this parable teach about wisdom and one's personal spirituality?

7. What is the “oil” you need for your “lamp”?

Reflecting On Sunday’s Reading, Copyright 2026, Richard A Cleveland.. (Available through emmausjourney.org.)

Reflecting On Sunday’s Readings

THE THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—November 15, 2026

Introduction: With today’s climate of fixation on the stock market and our economic situation, we ought to be able to clearly make sense of this week’s Gospel reading. Imagine if you will, how you would feel if during prosperous times you divided a large portion of your net worth among three stockbrokers. Then, after some time, two of them report back to you that they have made substantial returns on your investment, while the third one reports back that he didn’t even invest your money, but held it for safe keeping. You would be somewhat miffed also. You would probably take back your money from the third stockbroker, and give it to the one who had seen the best returns.

When we become members of God’s family and followers of Jesus, he invests the Holy Spirit into our lives. With the Holy Spirit comes new gifts and chrisms, which God intends to be used along with our natural abilities, to advance and grow his kingdom. Some, with false humility, bemoan that they don’t really have any gifts or abilities. This is not only untrue but also an illegitimate excuse. If we *have* the Holy Spirit, we *hav*e gifts and abilities.

Several years ago, our parish priest along with a team of individuals, visited our sister parish in Sumi, Ukraine. While there they met a woman, who had been bedridden with arthritis for some 24 years. Though her body was made inactive, her faith thrived as she grew in holiness and prayer. As they prepared to leave, she blessed them and also the Holy Apostles Parish back in the U.S. All those present knew that they were standing in the presence of a holy, godly woman whose faith was alive and active even though her body was immobile. Had she dared to have hidden behind her physical limitations and offered the excuse, “I have no gifts; I cannot do anything in my condition,” both she and the Body of Christ would have been the poorer. So, it is when you fail to invest the gifts God has invested in you.

This week’s second reading indicates that we are sons and daughters of the light. This phrase reminds us of Jesus’ admonition that, we are to be “salt” and” light.” Salt should whet people’s appetite for God and light should illuminate their darkness and give them hope. What is it that Jesus is actually referring to if not the utilization of out gifts and abilities for other’s well-being? He said that we should let our light shine before men, that they would see our “good works,” here on earth and glorify God who is in heaven. So rather than be complacent, doing little or nothing we should be investing the gifts Jesus gives us.

In the parable in this week’s Gospel reading the master never criticized the fact that the work of one servant did not match or exceed the work of another. Rather he commended each for their effort to make the most with what had been entrusted to them. Each received, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The only displeasure shown was toward the one who did not attempt to advance the master’s interest by working as best

he could. If the Lord returns suddenly, will he find you occupied using for his Kingdom what he has invested in you?

When next you find yourself hesitating to get involved using your gifts, think of Saint Catherine of Siena, one of the few women ever to receive the title of "Doctor of the Church." "She was a woman … She was a lay person … Most striking of all, she was almost illiterate … Catherine's humble background and lack of education may have made her an unlikely candidate for such an honor, but they never hindered her ability to receive divine revelation. In fact, God has so consistently revealed His word to the poor and the humble that, as Paul VI put it, we can consider them to be 'God's preferential choice.'" (From *Catherine of Siena: A Biography* by Anne B. Baldwin) What if Catherine had simply said, "I can't. I have nothing to offer"?

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

1. What do you find *most* commendable about this woman?

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 128:1-5

Second Reading — 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

2. How can we as a group help one another to be ready for Christ's coming?

Gospel Reading — Matthew 25:14-30

3. What are some things (gifts, talents, etc.) God has entrusted to you?

4. What attitudes controlled the servants'" behavior?

5. How do you feel about the harshness or leniency with which the master treated the servants?

6. What are God's expectations for you and your gifts and abilities for the coming 12 months?

Reflecting On Sunday's Reading, Copyright 2026, Richard A Cleveland.. (Available through emmausjourney.org.)

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY—November 22, 2026

Introduction: Over the years as we have observed the enthusiastic coverage of various British royal personages, we could aptly conclude that people in the U.S. are enamored with Great Britain's royalty, even though kings, queens and the monarchy are really foreign to the political and social structure of America. At least they have been ever since we threw off English rule and demanded independence and the right of self-rule.

We probably did not realize during the revolutionary process that we were not simply determining our future political structure but were also injecting a spirit of independence and individualism into the very DNA of the American people. Consequently, as various political and social scientists examine our culture, they find personal independence and individualism deeply engrained in our psyche. We see this trait expressed by our preoccupation with personal rights and freedom, to the exclusion of personal responsibility and corporate well-being. Many, many people in this country are not only comfortable demanding their rights but in fact are committed to defending their rights at all cost, even at the cost of others' freedom.

Does this independence and individualism spill over into our Christian life? Does it infringe on Christ's rule as King. Undoubtedly it does! We frequently see examples of people believing in their *personal infallibility* regarding both their value system and their behavior choices. Many are committed to the concept that, "***I*** will determine what ***I*** believe, and ***I*** will judge what is the acceptable behavior ***I*** will pursue." And if we are honest, we would readily admit that many Christians, sometimes even we ourselves, live under the rule of a personal trinity of "**I**, **me**, and **my**" enthroned in their heart.

Most of us are not fighting the battle of whether Jesus is the Savior or not. We know and believe that he is. Furthermore, we welcome the grace of having him pay for our sins. The battle we are fighting is the one of who will rule in our lives, who will call the shots on how we will live. Many have not yet bowed the knee in loving surrender and welcomed Jesus as both Christ *and* King. Consequently, an internal battle often goes on over every issue of Christian spirituality and behavior, "Do I give in on this issue, or keep control? Resist or surrender?" "Obey God, or obey my passions?" With these battles raging inside of us it is no wonder that we often experience little of the joy promised to us as Christians and members of Christ's Kingdom. But the promised joy primarily comes to those who willingly submit to his rule.

In the secret recesses of our soul dwells a throne room, and we alone hold the key that controls the door to this room and the right to sit and rule there. Bishop Fulton J. Sheen explains it well, "The best introduction to it may be told in the story of a painting. It is a picture of Christ standing at the side of an ivy-covered door and

knocking. Holman Hunt, its artist, was criticized because there was no latch to be seen on the outside of the door. The answer of the artist was that the latch is on the inside—we open it. Heaven knocks down no doors."[1] On this coming Christ the King Sunday we need to recognize Jesus standing at the door to our heart and knocking. Let's willingly unlatch the door and ask him to enthrone himself in our heart to rule for evermore. This is indeed the way to honor Christ the King.

1 *On Being Human*

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

1. Which aspect of the Lord's care do you find most comforting? Why?

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 23:1-3, 5-6

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

2. How do you think life would change if Jesus reigned more fully in Christian's lives?

Gospel Reading — Matthew 25:31-46

3. What are the six areas of service which Jesus identifies?

4. Which of these six areas of ministry would you find most difficult?

5. How is your understanding of Jesus' Kingship affected by this passage?

6. How do you feel about the concept of Christ's return as pictured here?

Reflecting On Sunday's Reading, Copyright 2026, Richard A Cleveland.. (Available through emmausjourney.org.)

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT—November 29, 2026

Introduction: *Befana, the Housewife, scrubbing her pane, saw three old sages ride down the lane, saw three grey travelers pass her door—Gaspar, Balthazar, Melchior.*

"Where journey you sirs?" she asked of them.

Balthazar answered, "To Bethlehem, for we have news of a marvelous thing. Born in a manger is Christ the King."

"Give Him my welcome!"

Then Gaspar smiled, "Come with us, mistress, to greet the Child."

"Oh, happily, happily would I fare, were my dusting through and I'd polished the stair."

Old Melchior leaned on his saddle horn, "Then send but a gift to the small Newborn."

"Oh, gladly, gladly I'd send Him one, were the hearthstone swept and my weaving done. As soon as ever I've baked my bread, I'll fetch Him a pillow for His head, and a coverlet too," Befana said. "When the rooms are aired and the linen dry, I'll look at the Babe." But the Three rode by.

She worked for a day and a night and a day, then, gifts in her hands, took up her way. But she never found where the Christ Child lay.

*And still she wanders at Christmastide, houseless, whose house was all her pride. Whose heart was tardy, whose gifts were late; wanders, and knocks at every gate. Crying, "Good people, the bells begin! Put off your toiling and let Love in.**

This week marks the beginning of Advent Season, followed by the Christmas Season. We, like Befana are faced with equally daunting responsibilities and routines. Whether housewife or executive, laborer or retiree the demands made upon us by the many good things in life never diminish from distracting us from pursuing the best in life. Will we allow the demands to also cause us to put off recognizing his coming and postpone bringing him the gift of ourselves?

Before we know it the gifts will be opened and relatives will be returning home, and the only lasting impression on our heart will be one of exhaustion and disappointment. Once again, we may be faced with the emptiness of heart that comes from realizing that another Advent/Christmas season has passed and we missed the opportunity to worship, and celebrate the Christ child.

Saint Bernard explains that there are three comings of Christ. The first is what we celebrate as Christmas, where he came in our flesh and in our weakness. In his final coming he will come in glory and majesty. "The intermediate coming is a hidden one; in it only the elect see the Lord within their own selves, and they are saved. In his first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness; in this middle coming he comes in spirit and in power; in the final coming he will be seen in glory and majesty."** Saint Bernard reminds us of Jesus' words, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we *will come to him."* What will we do with his coming to us?

These coming Advent and Christmas Seasons can be different, filled with awe and reflection, and with joy, peace, and adoration bubbling up within us. Instead of being like Befana, when the Befanas of our world knock on our door looking for where the Christ Child lays, we can invite them in, to find Jesus in our heart and in our home.

This week let's determine that the birth of Christ the King *will* be celebrated this season and all year long in our heart and lives.

* "The Ballad of Befana: An Epiphany Legend" from *Starlight: Beholding the Christmas Miracle All Year Long* by John Shea.
** *The Liturgy of the Hours,* Vol. I, page 169.

For the texts corresponding to this Sunday's Readings please either consult with your New American Bible, or the USCCB (United States Council of Catholic Bishops) website.

First Reading — Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:1-8

1. With what part of Isaiah's prayer of longing do you most identify?

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

2. Read this passage inserting your name where the pronoun "you" appears. How does this affect your view of yourself?

3. What does it mean to you to be called into the "fellowship of his Son"?

Gospel Reading — Mark 13:33-37

4. How can this passage be applied to the Advent Season?

5. What are the practical ramifications of “Take heed, watch, and pray”?

6. How can the lessons of Christ’s first advent be applied to his second coming (advent)?

Reflecting On Sunday’s Reading, Copyright 2026, Richard A Cleveland.. (Available through emmausjourney.org.)