A HOMILY FOR NOVEMBER

From the Pastor's Desk

Release Date: 10.30.26

In October of 2025, I wrote a 5-part homily that I delivered on the last 5 weekends of the liturgical year. I began on the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time and finished on the Solemnity of Christ the king. The problem with a multi part homily is that I changed Masses and on one weekend the deacons preached, so I was unable to deliver part IV. I promised everyone that in the *"From the Pastor's Desk"* series, I would offer the homily in written form this November. So here it is. Remember this homily is based on the readings from Cycle C readings and those 5 weekends in 2025. I will offer different homilies this year from Cycle A.

PART I: 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18, Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18, Luke 18:9-14

If we were to stand before the Lord this very night, what would he say to us? What would we say to him? Remember our God is just. The key to this to readings this week are the words uttered by the tax collector in the Gospel, *"O God, be merciful to me a sinner."*

The Lord hears the cry of the poor. There is no secret that the Scriptures including Jesus had a fondness for the poor and oppressed. Even the Church consistently speaks out for those who can't speak for themselves: The poor, homeless, hungry, the unborn. It does not mean that the Lord does not hear others; but that our God, Jesus, and the Church will always seek justice. Justice says that all of us are entitled to certain rights: food, clothing, housing, a decent wage, and life. When these are absent, The Lord hears the voices. We look around our world today. The poor are all around us and among us. Yet, so often, in our own sinfulness, which feeds our selfishness, we do not even notice our brothers and sisters that are in need.

I have kept the Faith. Paul cries out because he acknowledges that, although not perfect by any means, he has always delivered the Lord's message: one of Love, one of righteousness, one of hope. A message that spoke of this just God, one who stood by his side and protected him always. Have we kept the faith? I do not simply mean going to Mass every Sunday, but living the faith as Paul did. His life reflected the Gospel. Does our life reflect the Gospel and all it stands for? Can we stand before our just God and say, "Yes, Lord, I have kept the faith?"

Be merciful to me a sinner. These words are used by a tax collector but could have been any one of us. He recognized his sins, acknowledged them in his presence, and sought forgiveness in front of this just God. Because of his actions, he was exalted. Do we ever express these words on our lips and in our hearts? Does our pride, unwilling to acknowledge our own sinfulness get in the way? Are we afraid to say these words to our God thinking they will destroy our relationship with Christ. Look at what happened to the tax collector. Now is the time to be humble before this just God.

Our Lord will ask us, have you heard the cry of the poor? Have you finished the race, have you kept the faith? Are you humble as the tax collector in the Gospel?

PART II: THE COMMEMORATION OF THE FAITHFULLY DEPARTED

Wisdom 3:1-9, Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6, Romans 5:5-11, John 6:37-40

If we were to stand before the Lord this very night, what would he say to us? What would we say to him? On this day, we remember all those who have died in Christ. We pray for the repose of their souls knowing one day we will join them. What will we say to the Lord?

THE SOULS OF THE JUST IN THE HANDS OF GOD. This reading from Wisdom gives us great comfort. Think about it. No torment, no pain, just peace. How beautiful our faith is, that we understand and know that our God is not a cruel God, but rather brings us to himself and gives us peace. But we are called to be just to those around us, those far off and to be instruments of this justice.

BAPTIZED BY CHRIST, BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH. By the very baptism we receive as infants or adults**,** we are not only given life, but we are also willing then to share in his death**.** When we are baptized as children, we may not think of this at the time, but this is the reality. Even Jesus says to all who believe, you will also share in my suffering.

WE WILL NEVER DIE. Martha said, **"**Yes Lord, I do believe". Even the preface at this Mass will quote Hebrews, for those who have died, life has changed, not ended.

LOVE FAITH HOPE. Three gifts the Lord has given us. *Love* will never be taken away**.** *Faith* reveals to us that we know that they are with God. Hope burns in our souls and tells us that we will one day see them.

Our Lord will ask us, have you been just or unjust? Is there something else you want? Have you lived your life through the baptism that you have received?

PART III: FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF JOHN LATERAN

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12, Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9, 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17, John 2:13-22

If we were to stand before the Lord this very night, what would he say to us?

FLOWING WATERS. The theme of flowing waters is used in both the Old Testament reading from Ezekiel and the psalm. Our life with Christ begins with our own Baptism. Like the temple in the Old Testament reading, water is poured over us, and we become a new creation. Recall for yourselves the words from the rite of baptism, *"You have become a new creation in Christ."* And like God's creation which is refreshed by living waters and bears fruit, we too bear fruit in our lives. The Church is our means of being washed clean of sin, bearing fruit in this life, and being perfected in Christ. We ourselves become worthy temples (containers) of the Lord. We, as St Paul states to the Corinthians, are "holy" because the temple of the Holy Spirit dwells within us.

ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC. We all profess every weekend the Nicene Creed. It is the same Eucharist, the same Jesus in every liturgy celebrated throughout the world. It is here we eat and drink and celebrate our oneness with Christ. When we are reminded of a far-off distant Cathedral, we are also reminded that we are not simply here to satisfy some personal desire to be closer to Christ, but we are one in Christ through this Eucharistic feast. It is through this Eucharist, like the living waters of baptism, we can bear fruit. As Ezekiel states, we are changed, our leaves never fade and the fruit we bear will never fail.

Today as we recall the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the Gospel reminds us of all that Jesus is our ultimate Temple. He is our model of perfection, holiness, and oneness with God. Jesus' anger in the Gospel is not about the animals and money changers in the temple, but rather, he is the only temple which will never be destroyed. By foreshadowing his own death through his own statement, Jesus offers not only the Church of St John but us that in Christ our hope of resurrection exists.

This is our Church. Whether we are here at St Joseph, our Cathedral of St Andrew in downtown Little Rock, or any local church, whether we are at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, or at John Lateran, it is the same Church, the same Eucharist, and the same Christ. It is what we celebrate today.

Our Lord will ask us, are you a temple of God? Does the Spirit dwell within you? What consumes you? What is your zeal?

PART IV: 33RD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

Malachi 3:19-20a, Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12, Luke 21:5-19

If we were to stand before the Lord this very night, what would he say to us?

IMITATE CHRIST. Paul challenges the Thessalonians to be imitators of him; to conduct themselves in a way worthy of the title he gives them - Christian. Imitation is the key; imitate the Lord, imitate the saints, and imitate all that is good. Work for justice and all that is right. Be imitators of the Gospel. So many when they think about the end time, think of *'saving'* themselves. What do I need to do? But Paul reminds us of the only way to be prepared for the coming of the Lord is to imitate him in all things.

LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. What has Christ taught us? What has the Church taught us? Why are we here? What does the Eucharist offer us? In preparing for the end, we simply live what we profess in our hearts, mind, and lips. Whenever we see movies or read of this 'end time', it's always associated with destruction. But when we live the Christian life every day, we are always prepared for what comes our way.

EXPECT SUFFERING. Suffering does not come from an earthquake or famine or destruction of this planet. But suffering comes from trying to align our will with God's will. Suffering comes from total abandonment of who we are and putting on the Wisdom of God. In other words, our suffering is dying to self, so that we reflect the image and likeness of God. Suffering makes us pure and ready for our encounter with God.

PERSEVERE. Jesus says in perseverance we will secure our lives, if we hold out to the end. Whatever we start out doing, finish the race. The fear of this end time is tied to a lack of perseverance. No matter what comes our way, when we are focused on God and him only, we are truly ready for the return of our God.

THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN. Actually, we have heard all this before. People will try to create fear about the coming of the Lord. But throughout this Liturgical year, Jesus in Luke's Gospel has been preparing us for this day. Have you been listening. Have you understood? To be prepared for the end time means not preparing for something that may or may not happen today, but be prepared today for that which will happen tomorrow. But it's not the destruction of this world and our lives as we know it, it's our encounter with God; face to face. The people asked Jesus, "When will this happen, what will it be like?"

Our Lord will ask us, have you imitated me in all things, especially in seeking justice for all? Were you a model of holiness? He will ask you, have you persevered in faith?

PART V: CHRIST THE KING

2 Samuel 5:1-3, Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5, Colossians 1:12-20, Luke 23:35-43

If we were to stand before the Lord this very night, what would he say to us?

FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD. Paul says it so wonderfully in his letter to the Colossians:
He is the firstborn of all creation, for in him were created all things in the heavens and on earth.
This creation we call the "world" and everything in, belongs to God. It has been wonderfully created.

All things are good. There is no talk of evil or sin. This world and all things reflect God's love, an image of our creator.

SIN ENTERED THE WORLD. We know the story of Genesis**.** We know it only gets worse, our weakness, our inability to restrain ourselves; we sin again. The beauty of this world is covered by the darkness of sin.
Somehow, some way, we begin to look for a Savior. Enter Our Savior; Jesus, our Salvation History begins.
The Mission begins a three-year ministry in which the Gospel of trying to restore us to goodness begins, followers and disciples alike. Reform your lives, believe in the good news, you are healed, you are forgiven. I'll be your shepherd; you will be my sheep, my people. It looks like good triumphed over sin. But no!
Evil in the form of those against Jesus; The Pharisees, the scribes, his own people: Crucify Him! Crucify Him!
And they did! It looks like our Messiah has lost, even on the cross, evil is present in the form of a robber
But we see the final victory in the words of Jesus: You will be with me today in Paradise. We all know the rest of the story.

CHRIST THE KING, TODAY AND ALWAYS. Today we celebrate that victory, good has overcome evil. In fact, it always has. At the end of this liturgical year, we celebrate what we have been celebrating since the resurrection; Jesus is our savior, He is our King, He is our Lord. He has won the victory and in death, there is no victory, no sting.

If we were to stand before the Lord this very night, what would he say to us? Do not be afraid to stand before our King. Do not be afraid of that day. He gives us the path. Give thanks to him for he is good. Hear the cry of the poor! Keep the faith. Walk humbly before your God. Be just. Consume only that which comes from God. Imitate him in all things, seeking holiness and grace.

If we were to stand before the Lord this very night, what would he say to us? If you have listened to the Lord speaking to us the past 5 weekends, you know we should go rejoicing to the house of God. If we do things well, he will open the door to the kingdom of God for us.

Father John