



November 15, 2020

*Thirty-Third Sunday
in Ordinary Time*

*Well done, my good and faithful servant.
Since you were faithful in small matters,
I will give you great responsibilities.
Come, share your master's joy.*

Matthew 25:21

Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne (1769-1852)

November 18

Pope Benedict once declared himself struck by how remarkably diverse our American saints are—some native born: Mother Seton, Katherine Drexel, Kateri Tekakwitha; most, like many Catholics today, immigrants: Padre Serra, Bishop Neumann, Mother Cabrini, Rose Philippine Duchesne. When the French Revolution that dispersed her convent ended, Rose joined the Religious of the Sacred Heart, volunteering for their United States mission, opening the first free school west of the Mississippi. Only after lengthy service as Superior did Rose—now seventy-one—realize her life's dream, undertaking a mission among the Potawatomi Indians. When some worried about her advanced age and failing health, the Jesuit mission leader overruled them: "She must come! She may not be able to do much work, but she'll bring the mission success by praying for us!" Frustrated by her inability to learn their languages, Rose nevertheless "spoke" to the Native Americans by her prayerful presence before the tabernacle. "Quah-kah-kanum-ad," they named her, "Woman-Who-Prays-Always"—their way of bestowing the title the Church would later make official: saint!

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Change Our Lives

The letters of Paul to the Thessalonians are among his earliest writings, and are driven by his belief and the belief of the entire early Christian community that the return of Christ was imminent, and that devoting time or attention to anything else was foolish.

As time progressed, this fervor subsided a bit. Today we may wonder, when we hear these readings about the coming end-times, if we should take them to heart, if we really believe that Christ still may come upon us as a "thief at night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Does this mean that we are to stop our long-range goal-setting, get rid of our yearly calendars and planners, or stop putting money in the college education fund? Of course not. What it does mean is that we need to change our lives, living like children of the light and illuminating the world around us with the light of the gospel. Then, on that day, when the details of our daily living become unimportant, we will be ready to find our peace and security in Christ Jesus.

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Readings for the Week

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| Monday: | Rv 1:1-4; 2:1-5; Ps 1:1-4, 6; Lk 18:35-43 |
| Tuesday: | Rv 3:1-6, 14-22; Ps 15:2-5; Lk 19:1-10 |
| Wednesday: | Rv 4:1-11; Ps 150:1b-6; Lk 19:11-28, or (for the memorial of the Dedication) Acts 28:11-16, 30-31; Ps 98:1-6; Mt 14:22-33 |
| Thursday: | Rv 5:1-10; Ps 149:1b-6a, 9b; Lk 19:41-44 |
| Friday: | Rv 10:8-11; Ps 119:14, 24, 72, 103, 111, 131; Lk 19:45-48 |
| Saturday: | Rv 11:4-12; Ps 144:1b, 2, 9-10; Lk 20:27-40 |
| Sunday: | Ez 34:11-12, 15-17; Ps 23:1-3, 5-6; 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28; Mt 25:31-46 |



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Saints and Special Observances

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| Sunday: | Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| Monday: | St. Margaret of Scotland; St. Gertrude |
| Tuesday: | St. Elizabeth of Hungary |
| Wednesday: | Dedication of the Basilicas of Ss. Peter and Paul; St. Rose Philippine Duchesne |
| Saturday: | The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary |

saint snippets

November 16

Charity has transformed the world.

St. Giuseppe Moscati
20th-century Italian doctor, researcher, and professor known for his deep faith, miraculous cures, and concern for the poor.

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Blessed are you who fear the LORD.

— Psalm 128:1a

Treasures from Our Tradition

New religious faith gives fresh lenses for viewing human customs, and the wisdom to transform them. In the ancient world, the Romans feared the dead. Funeral customs were designed to hasten the departure of souls to the next world. Cremation was the rule, although burial increased in popularity in the second century. Procession from the place of death to the place of cremation or burial was the most important part of the funeral. Those who carried the funeral bier carried it low, close to the ground, to promote the soul's departure to the nether world.

Christians, on the other hand, did not fear the dead, but cherished them as they consigned them to Christ's love and protection. Gradually, they began to reject customs rooted in fear. Christians carried their dead to their resting places singing, with the bier carried high, away from the ground and toward the heavens. For the Christian, the grave was a sign of hope and a place of remembrance. Superstitious Romans feared burial places, and so the Christians cherished them as places of remembrance and prayer, and in time, even celebrated the Eucharist there. In November, many of us visit the cemetery for prayer and the autumn clean-up. By cherishing our dead, we are responding in faith to a vital part of our Christian tradition.

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Paul Harvey was a popular radio broadcaster with a daily program during which he would relate a historical anecdote, but it would have a twist at the end, and then he would intone "and now you know the rest of the story." Our scriptures today are like that. We await the coming Christ as the readings describe for us how to be good servants, but they give us a limited picture. The famous Proverbs passage, "The Valiant Wife" is edited down from the full selection (31:10–31) to just a few verses. Take a couple moments to explore the fuller selection. Psalm 128 proclaims, "Blessed are those who fear the Lord," but in this context "fear" doesn't mean dread and trepidation. Rather, this kind of fear means "to show awe," and there are wonderful promises made to those who do. The letter to the Thessalonians continues the call to be alert, and Matthew shows us various ways that people might respond to God in the parable of the talents. The Gospel is presented in long and shortened versions; be sure to read the whole thing so you can get "the rest of the story."

REMAIN IN ME

In the story of the talents, the head of the household leaves the servants "talents" or money, which they are expected to foster and develop during the leader's absence. Today we think of talent as an innate ability or a skill. It is interesting that they were distributed "according to ability," which would express a certain intimacy as we realize that the

master knew each one, and already had an idea of their capabilities. They were not given explicit instructions like "put this in the bank" or "invest this in your portfolio" or "take piano lessons." Rather, we are told that the goods were divided unequally. One received five, one received two, and the last received one.

BEAR MUCH FRUIT

When the head of the household returned, the outcomes were just as varied as we and our responses might be. Some people are multitalented, and capable of accomplishing many great things, like the servant who turned five into ten.

Others may be more inclined to do one or two things very well and may excel in them. Still, there are some who may struggle in life, and their accomplishments are very small. But those who made use of their gifts were praised

and told, "Well done, good and faithful servant." When it came to the second coming, the return of their master, they both made some effort. The only one in whom the head of household showed any disappointment was the one who made absolutely no effort, the one who was frozen by fear or indifference. As we journey toward the kingdom, there are not always clear instructions. We are simply asked to try, to give it our best effort. There is nothing in the passage to say that these servants didn't make mistakes along the way, but their master saw them and loved and praised them for their actions, their attempts, as God will do with us. And now you know the rest of the story.



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