**4 November | 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time | Mark 12:28b-34** **|**

**The Greatest Commandment**

Unlike other occasions, the question is genuine rather a trap being set here. The man just wants to know Jesus’ opinion as a rabbi and teacher. Jesus makes it very clear that the essence of the Law is to ‘Love the Lord our God’ and to ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ When one understands this, one is not far from the Kingdom of God.

**11 November | 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time | Mark 12:38-44 | Almsgiving**

This longer form of the widow’s mite combines two quite distinct traditions: Jesus' denunciation of the scribes and the episode of the widow with two coins. The denunciation of the scribes forms the conclusion to the series of Jerusalem conflict stories, whose function is to show the widening gulf between Jesus and the Jerusalem authorities, and so to prepare the way for the Sanhedrin's decision to get rid of Jesus. Mark has located the conflicts in the temple, and the story of the widow is located there by its content.

Whether by design or not, however, the two stories, taken together in this way, provide a foil for one another, for the behaviour of the scribes is contrasted sharply with that of the widow. Perhaps the story of the widow was used in catechesis to illustrate the duty of almsgiving.

**18 November | 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | Mark 13:24-32 |**

**Coming of the Son of Man**

While apocalyptic writing is recognized by its scary and dark imagery of trials, tribulations, and turmoil in the heavens, there is also the consoling light at the heart of it all, which overcomes the darkness. Here that consolation takes the form of the glorious Son of Man, Jesus, coming on the clouds to gather his chosen and faithful ones from all over the earth.

Mark’s readers today, as well as his first readers, might well be lifted up by this promise of God’s final victory over whatever difficulties or darkness envelop them and their world. Encouraged by this hopeful vision, they can accept more readily their responsibilities to be a consoling light for those who may not yet have experienced the hopeful side of the gospel promises.

“We do not know when, but it is near, so persevere!” Just as surely as Jesus’ other predictions have come to pass (his death and resurrection, the fall of Jerusalem, the trials his followers would endure), so also will he come again in glory to save his chosen ones. This encouraging message of concludes with the final call of Jesus to his faithful followers: “The end is near and will happen soon. You will see the signs of the end just as clearly as you see the coming of summer by the new leaves on the fig tree.” “But” underlines Mark’s Jesus, “since no one knows the day or the hour when the end will come, be watchful and be alert.

**25 November | Jesus Christ, King of the Universe | John 18:33b-37 |**

**Christ’s Kingdom**

One of the most dramatic scenes in John’s Passion Narrative is the confrontation between Jesus and Pilate.  One can even call it ‘Pilate on Trial’.  He is caught between the hostile crowd outside and the calm figure of Jesus in the praetorium.  He asks Jesus directly if he is the king of the Jews, the first mention of such a charge, bringing together a religious and political accusation.  Jesus answers with a question as to the source of the question.

Jesus explains that his rule or kingdom is not of this world; what it stands for in origin and practice comes from God, clearly shown by the non use of force and violence to defend Jesus himself.  The sole reason for Jesus entry into the world was to testify to the truth that stares an uncomprehending Pilate in the face.  Such a kingdom has nothing to do with earthly power and show, with grand titles, clothes, territories, etc.