



## The Word...

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God,  
"the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty"  
*(From Rv 1:5-8).*

## Pondering the Word...

Today is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Yes, Advent starts next Sunday! (And we transition to *Provisions for the Journey to Bethlehem* for the season.)

We usually wait until New Year's to do the examen of the past year. After giving thanks and asking for light, we reflect: "Where have I been present to the Spirit this year? Where might I have missed the Spirit's light and guidance? What gave me life this year (I rejoice) and what drained me (if it is sin, I repent)? What did I learn? For whom or what do I pray?" As I prayed about what to write for today, the Spirit suggested I go back to where we started the liturgical year in January and use that as a basis for our examen:

*Each year, I trust the Spirit to inspire a theme I can incorporate into our reflections for ordinary time. This year, two related themes have emerged: [Like the Magi], looking for "another way" (Mt 2:1-12), for "something new" (Is 43:19). These themes can apply daily in our personal lives—a more doable twist on the traditional New Year's resolutions that often set us up to fail—but also in the way we encounter other people. Has the "same old way" of living and thinking and responding grown stale, or worse, led me to encounter evils: intolerance, bigotry, apathy, fear, or even hatred and violence? Could another way allow God to do something new in my life?*

## Living the Word...

I don't care for the linear, Western notion of "Alpha and Omega"—God has no beginning and no end—but it comes in handy when we want to look back and give thanks for what has transpired, let go of what is burdening us, make amends, and look forward to new beginnings. (See Friday's reflection.)

So, before you get sucked into the busyness of the season, use this week to prepare for the most amazing event in history—God's ultimate act of companionship: the Incarnation. Schedule an hour, more if you can, for your examen. Look back, reflect, and journal (or at least jot something on the lines below): "What was the 'something new' that happened this past year? How were you led to look at things in 'another way?' What did you or have you to learn from what has transpired this year? What prayers do you have for the coming year?" (In the US, this Thursday is Thanksgiving. Make a list of what you are grateful for and share it with others.)

Personal Reflections and Ideas: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Mon, Nov 25:** *“These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes”* (Rv 14:1-3, 4b-5). We know “the Lamb” is Jesus. And where does Jesus go? Where did he tell us we would find him? (Mt 25). Are we willing to follow him *wherever* he goes, or do we stand at arms’ length, giving, as the rich do in today’s gospel, from our surplus, rather than from our poverty? Do we even know what our “poverty” is? **Provision: Where are you willing to follow “the Lamb?”** I ask myself this a lot: “Where will I see you today, Lord, and will I be willing to follow where you lead? Where am I ‘poor’ today?” Maybe time is where I am poor. Maybe it’s trust in God’s protection, or it’s patience or courage. Reflect today on what keeps you from following “the Lamb.”

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**Tue, Nov 26:** *“See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and ‘The time has come.’ Do not follow them!”* (Lk 21:5-11). Yesterday, Psalm 24 asks the question: *“Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord?”* The answer from the Hebrew translation: *“The clean of hands and the pure of heart who has given no oath in a lie and has sworn not in deceit.”* **Provision: Do not be deceived.** As Annie Dillard reminds us, none of us are worthy to ascend this mountain, but a pure heart doesn’t mean a perfect heart. It means a heart of love, hope, and mercy, a heart that allows God’s grace to flow to others. A heart that is honest. Whom do you follow?

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**Wed, Nov 27:** *“By your perseverance you will secure your lives”* (Lk 21: 12-19).

I don’t know how it is for you, but there are times—like now—when I want to throw my hands up in the air and cry, “What’s the use? What good is it to speak of and act from love and peace when hate and violence and greed seem to have the upper hand?” This is a sure sign I am spending way too much time doomscrolling and not enough time in prayer. **Provision: Take (a lot of) time to pray.** If you are feeling discouraged too, find quiet time to be with God. Tell God your frustrations and doubts. Ask God to enlighten and strengthen your body, heart, mind, and soul so you can persevere. Prayer is the rock onto which we will secure our lives.

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**Thu, Nov 28:** *“Because your merchants were the great ones of the world, all nations were led astray by your magic potion”* (Rv 18:1-2, 21-23; 19:1-3, 9). It’s so sad that this season, the time we prepare for the poor baby in the manger, has been overrun by rampant consumerism. But worse, the rise of “merchants “who peddle the “magic potion” of authoritarianism, hate, and lies could prove ruinous for all but the merchants themselves. Could it be that the worshippers of money and power are ushering in the fall of the new Babylon? **Provision: “Do the next loving thing.”** My friend, Nora, provided me with this advice a few years ago when I faced a difficult situation. It has become my mantra. It is all I can do in the face of what I see as a real existential threat. So, as Jesus told us yesterday, “Stand erect and raise your heads.” Do the next loving thing.

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**Fri, Nov 29:** *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth”* (Rv 20:1-4, 11-21:2). In his book on Revelations, *Reversed Thunder*, Rev. Eugene Peterson provides a lovely take on John’s final visions: *“It is not an ending, but a fresh beginning. ...The biblical story [in Genesis] began quite logically with a beginning. Now it draws to an end, not quite so logically, with a beginning.”* He continues, *“The story that has creation for its first word, has creation for its last word.”* He quotes T. S. Eliot: *“The end is where we start from.”* **Provision: Find solace in God’s plan.** John’s words have given me some comfort in these dark days and helps me to keep my focus on God. Reading Revelations in the midst of the current strife can be scary, just as it has been over the millennia. Stand apart from the newsfeed today and focus on John’s words. See if you can bring about in your life and the lives of those around you a tiny glimpse of a new heaven and earth.

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**Sat, Nov 30:** *“The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; The decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. ...The command of the LORD is clear”* (Ps 19). “Refresh the soul.” Ahh, that sounds nice! We all could use some refreshment! And what is this law, this decree, this command of the Lord? It is simple: Love our Creator. Love all the Creator’s works—other humans, the earth and its creatures. Love yourself and the true gift you are to the world. **Provision: Keep it simple.** The older I get, the more I realize that so much of organized religion is unnecessary rules and interpretations, reasons for division and conflict. *“When there is peace among religions, there will be peace in the world”* (Dalai Lama). Who does not believe peace is God’s desire? As we go into this blessed season, let’s keep things simple: prepare, not only the house, but your heart. Take time to rejoice in all of God’s creation. And, clearly, do the next loving thing—for God, for others, for yourself.