

**The Thief in the Night
(33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)**

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6—The Day of the Lord Comes like a Thief

¹ *But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you.* ² *For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.* ³ *When people say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape.* ⁴ *But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief.* ⁵ *For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.* ⁶ *So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.* ⁷ *For those who sleep sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.* (1 Thessalonians 5:1-7)

1. Eschatology: “times and seasons” (1 Thess 5:1)
2. Day of the Lord = day of judgment/final judgment (1 Thess 5:2)
3. Birth Pangs: sufferings that precede the final judgment (1 Thess 5:3)
4. Thief: analogy taken from the parables of Jesus:

⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, *that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into.* ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready; *for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.* (Matthew 24:42-44)

5. Vigilance: “keep awake” and “be sober” (1 Thess 5:6)

The Living Tradition

Thomas Aquinas: “It shall ‘come as a thief’, that is, unannounced: “if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been awake” (Luke 12:38). “The day of the Lord will come like a thief” (2 Pet 3:10). “I will come like a thief” (Rev 3:3)... [I]t is not certain at what hour it will occur. (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians* no. 108; trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.)

Catechism: Since the Ascension Christ’s coming in glory has been imminent, even though “*it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.*” (Acts 1:7; cf. Mark 13:32) *This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are “delayed.”* (CCC 673; cf. Matt 24:44; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:3-12)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Why do you think Paul is so concerned that his audience realize that they do not know when the Second Coming will take place? What are some practical ways to follow Paul's advice to "keep awake" and "be sober" (1 Thess 5:6)?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. Peter Gorday, ed. *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IX; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 2000).
3. Nathan Eubank, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019).