

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 159

Reading 1 - [Malachi 3:19-20a](#)

Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire, leaving them neither root nor branch, says the LORD of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 98:5-6, 7-8, 9](#) R. (cf. 9) **The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.**

Reading 2 - [2 Thessalonians 3:7-12](#)

Brothers and sisters: You know how one must imitate us. For we did not act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone. On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day we worked, so as not to burden any of you. Not that we do not have the right. Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you, so that you might imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat. We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.

Gospel - [Luke 21:5-19](#)

While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here--the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."

Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" He answered, "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! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.

"Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

Let's take a philosophical approach to breaking open the Word today. Are you familiar with [Ayn Rand](#)? It might surprise you to know that her books, [one in particular](#), you can probably guess which one, was the most influential book in my life that I had ever read. It still ranks as number two. It wasn't influential in the way she intended. In fact, it was, oddly enough, very much part of God's gradual work in me for my conversion. Imagine that. Ms. Rand was not a friend of the church. She was one of those that hated us because of Jesus, as the Gospel says. She was an intellectual persecutor. From her respected position in academia and as a self-avowed enemy of faith, religion, and in particular the Catholic Church, she often took issue with the teachings of the faith.

In 1967, Pope Paul VI wrote one such document that she took strong issue with. In that document, 'On the Development of Peoples, known in the Church as '[Populorum Progressio](#)' he wrote, *"Man's personal and collective fulfillment could be jeopardized if the proper scale of values were not maintained. The pursuit of life's necessities is quite legitimate. Hence, we are duty bound to do the work which enables us to obtain them."* Recalling to mind the words of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, *"if anyone is unwilling to work, do not let him eat."* He continued, *"but the acquisition of worldly goods can lead man to greed, to the unrelenting desire for more. to the pursuit of greater personal power. Rich and poor alike, be they individuals, families, or nations, can fall prey to avarice and soul stifling materialism."*¹

Ms. Rand, architect of [Objectivism](#) - a philosophy for living on earth, cyclically popular among college students, held to the opposite view. She said that her *"philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute."* Elaborating on this when commenting on the Pope's encyclical, she wrote that *"the dominant chord of the encyclical's sense of life is hatred for man's mind — hence hatred for man — hence hatred for life and for this earth — hence hatred for man's enjoyment of his life on earth — and hence, as a last and least consequence, hatred for the only social system that makes all these values possible in practice: capitalism."*² She continued, *"the encyclical is the voice of the Dark Ages, rising again in today's [1967] intellectual vacuum, like a cold wind whistling through the empty streets of an abandoned civilization... unable to resolve a lethal contradiction, the conflict between individualism and altruism, the West is giving up. When men give up reason and freedom, the vacuum is filled by faith and force."*³

She was opposed to any attempt, especially by the Catholic Church, to direct human meaning and purpose to anything that would require sacrifice, limits, or goals that were opposed to a person's self-interest. In the words of the main character, of Atlas Shrugged, John Galt said, *"I swear, by my life and my love of it, that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine."* She wrote volumes urging people to be selfish. But not selfish in the way in which you might first imagine. For her this meant, following reason, not whims or faith. Working hard to achieve a life of purpose and productiveness. Earning genuine self-esteem. Pursuing your own happiness as your highest moral aim. Prospering by treating others as individuals, trading value for value. Acting thoughtlessly and victimizing others, Rand claimed, is not in your self-interest. In other words, be selfish but be nice and friendly about it.

In the same Papal document, Pope Paul VI further defined the difference between the Christian world view and that of Ms. Rand. He wrote that, *"Neither individuals nor nations should regard the possession of more and more goods as the ultimate objective. Every kind of progress is a two-edged sword. It is necessary if man is to grow as a human being; yet it can also enslave him, if he comes to regard it as the supreme good and cannot look beyond it. When this happens, men harden their hearts, shut out others from their minds"*

¹ Claudia Carlen, ed., [The Papal Encyclicals: 1958–1981](#) (Ypsilanti, MI: The Pierian Press, 1990), 186.

² "Requiem for Man," [Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal](#), 304

³ "Requiem for Man," [Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal](#), 316

and gather together solely for reasons of self-interest rather than out of friendship; dissension and disunity follow soon after. Thus, the exclusive pursuit of material possessions prevents man's growth as a human being and stands in opposition to his true grandeur. Avarice, in individuals and in nations, is the most obvious form of stultified moral development."⁴

Why am I bringing up words written in 1967, how is this all relevant in light of the readings? This month the readings have been focused on judgment and the four last things as are they today. And, at the heart of these readings has been a question for each of us. Does any of it matter? To be fair, if it didn't matter on some level, none of you would be here. But to what degree does it all matter to us? Do I think and live according to Miss Rand's objectivism and view of the human person?

It can be difficult to admit. Many of us in the church strive to straddle both sides of this divide, even though they're extreme opposites, and we try to somehow find the middle ground between them, where there is in fact none to be found. To what degree do I think and live according to her objectivism and view of the human person? Or am I growing and being transformed by my relationship with Jesus and belief in what he says? Is it making a difference in my life, in the way I think, in what I choose, in how I treat other people? Do I see all or parts of life and relationships as a social contract where we trade value for value. Do I try to be like the comfy image of Jesus, a nice guy who wants us to be nice to everybody... while I can still be selfish in the undercurrent of my life.

Reflecting honestly on this can ensure that the coming advent and the celebration of the incarnation of the son of the living God will bring me closer to being the lover of God, neighbor, and self that God created us to be and saved us to become. Can we be honest with ourselves, that we cannot live in part or whole, according to Rand's philosophy that well articulates the way of the world, while at the same time being a full-on disciple of Christ. It just doesn't work. You can't have it both ways. We need to identify the underlying philosophy of our own thoughts, world view, idea of the human person. Whose lead are we following? What do we really believe? And how does what we believe affect our actions.

Back to the impact on me. Of course, as I said, I wasn't a believer in God. To be honest, it wasn't about believing or not believing. I just didn't care. You want to believe in God, that's great. Have at it. You don't want to believe in God, that's great. Have at it. I just didn't care. I believed in me. When I read this book and all her other books, what I saw was me. And it horrified me because deep in my soul, I knew that what she had spelled out in black and white, it wasn't who I wanted to be, and it wasn't who I knew I should be. I knew that human life ought not to be like this. And yet I was doing everything in my power to make it so. That was a great awakening. It was a brilliant move on the part of God to bring her works into my world. It was a clear and present indication of who I was. And I didn't like what I saw. Which then moved me, although it wasn't like, you know, the angels fell from the sky and I was like, "Oh my gosh, God, I'm so sorry. I love you." That didn't happen. But what did happen was I resumed, corrected my course, in the search for truth, what it meant to be a human being in the world. That set me on a path that God continued to lead me on, guiding me and helping me to better understand, which eventually made it possible for me to see and hear the living God.

I think all of us have a little bit of Ayn Rand in us that needs to go, so that we can live awake and aware to the real presence of the creator God, the efforts of the guiding Holy Spirit, and of the sacrificed Son of God in our midst. Living in certainty that God matters, that there will be judgment, and we need to be ready for that. We need to live and die for others according to the love of God, love of neighbor, and love of ourselves – striving to become best human being possible. And, believe firmly that, it's God who defines what that means.

⁴ Claudia Carlen, ed., [The Papal Encyclicals: 1958–1981](#) (Ypsilanti, MI: The Pierian Press, 1990), 186.

There being no middle ground between thinking with Ayn Rand or thinking with the Church, we need to choose. As I said earlier, the choice for those who see themselves as believing Christians isn't one world view over the other, it's that we must untangle the two and live more fully the Christian way, truth, and life. Our lives ought not to be compartmentalized, such that we live the more objectivist way in our professional lives and relationships with strangers, as though there will be no judgement at the end – and live our private lives and close relationships as though there will be judgement. God desires us to be wholly integrated as a human person and seeks to gather us together under healing wings and prepared for the 'Day of the Lord'. All of us have an expiration date and as Ms. Rand discovered upon her death, there is a God and there is a face-to-face meeting with the Son of God.

“Our faith is authentic when it embraces our whole life, when it becomes a criterion for our decisions, when it makes us women and men committed to doing what is right and who take risks out of love, even as Jesus did. There are times when this involves making difficult and unpopular decisions, resisting our selfish inclinations, placing ourselves at the service of others, and persevering in doing what is right when the logic of evil seems to prevail, and so on. Once we cross that threshold, however, we will discover that life flourishes anew. From that moment on, we will enter into the immense heart of God and the joy of the eternal banquet that he has prepared for us.”⁵

Central to becoming an integrated whole, to recognizing the sacredness of the human person and therefore becoming Saints, is the participating in the Mass and worthily receiving the Eucharist. I highly recommend reading the 3-book series, "Jesus of Nazareth", by Pope Benedict XVI.⁶ There, he delves into the Lord's Prayer line by line. He points out that the phrase “our daily bread” has many layers, as was the intention of the Gospel authors who had to invent the Greek word to capture their meaning. The word “daily” is the Greek word "epiousios", coined by the evangelists. It doesn't exist outside of the Gospels. So, when Jesus told us to ask God for “epiousios bread”, this was something new. We are being told to ask for the bread that is “is necessary for existence”, a request for the food needed to live each day. But also, to ask for "Bread for the future". The prayer asks for “tomorrow's bread” for today, which makes no sense if the bread is only earthly bread. Thus, a better sense of the prayer is understood to be asking for the Eucharist, which is the “bread of angels” that we can and do receive today at Mass! Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes that the Lord's Prayer encompasses both our earthly needs and our spiritual nourishment.

When we live in authentic friendship with God, in a relationship that defines us, we necessarily desire to glorify and praise God. Not because of some institutional force, but by virtue of the love that calls us to continually shake off any drowsiness that might invade our hearts and to think about the greatness to which we're called. We will live with pure eschatological fervor while also working while we wait for our Saviors return. This Holiness to which we are called, means to live in right relationship with God. It means that our wills are united with his, in good times and in bad, and that gives us the eternal joy of knowing we are being loved and loving in return. We persevere in that friendship, with the help of his grace and in so doing, secure our lives. You will be ready because you will have loved. You will be ready because you've lived each day well, as if it were your last, and you lived it 'imitatio Dei' – in the imitation of God.

There is more than death in this life, it is not the end. Though our lives won't be easy, but if we play well, we win - automatically. If a Christian gives his all, spends his life fighting to be more like Christ each day in spite of hardship, persecution, opposition and enemies, then victory is assured. Know, Love, Follow Christ

⁵ Pope Leo XIV August 24th, 2025

⁶ JESUS OF NAZARETH; PART TWO *Holy Week From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*; Joseph Ratzinger Pope Benedict XVI English translation provided by the Vatican Secretariat of State IGNATIUS PRESS • SAN FRANCISCO 2011

Glossary of Key Terms

Term / Name	Definition
Altruism	A concept Ayn Rand placed in "lethal contradiction" with individualism.
Atlas Shrugged	A book by Ayn Rand featuring the main character John Galt, whose oath is quoted in the homily.
Avarice	Greed. Described by Pope Paul VI as a potential result of acquiring worldly goods and "the most obvious form of stultified moral development."
Capitalism	The social system that Ayn Rand claimed the encyclical hated because it makes her favored values (enjoyment of life, freedom) possible in practice.
Epiousios	The unique Greek word for "daily" in the Lord's Prayer, coined by the Gospel authors. It has a dual meaning: the bread "necessary for existence" and the "bread for the future," understood as the Eucharist.
Four Last Things	A theological theme (death, judgment, heaven, hell) that the homily identifies as a focus of the month's readings.
Imitatio Dei	A Latin phrase meaning "in the imitation of God." The homily suggests a person is ready for judgment if they have lived their life this way.
Jesus of Nazareth	A 3-book series by Pope Benedict XVI, recommended in the homily for its in-depth analysis of the Lord's Prayer.
John Galt	The main character of Ayn Rand's novel <i>Atlas Shrugged</i> , quoted as swearing, "that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine."
Objectivism	Ayn Rand's "philosophy for living on earth," which posits man as a heroic being whose moral purpose is his own happiness, whose noblest activity is productive achievement, and whose only absolute is reason.
Pope Benedict XVI	The author of the <i>Jesus of Nazareth</i> series, cited for his theological explanation of "epiousios."
Pope Paul VI	The author of the 1967 papal encyclical <i>Populorum Progressio</i> .
Populorum Progressio	A papal encyclical from 1967, titled 'On the Development of Peoples'. It argues for a proper scale of values and warns against the dangers of materialism, a position that Ayn Rand strongly criticized.
St. Paul	Referenced by Pope Paul VI for his words to the Thessalonians: "if anyone is unwilling to work, do not let him eat."

The Philosophical Divide: Objectivism vs. The Christian Worldview

This document synthesizes the core themes of a homily that presents a stark and irreconcilable conflict between two opposing life philosophies: Ayn Rand's Objectivism and the Catholic Christian worldview. The analysis is framed by a 1967 critique from Rand on Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*. Objectivism is defined by rational self-interest, with individual happiness as the highest moral purpose and productive achievement as the noblest activity. In direct opposition, the Christian perspective, articulated by Pope Paul VI, warns that the exclusive pursuit of material possessions stifles moral development, leads to avarice, and prevents true human growth, which is found in love, service, and sacrifice.

Father Blair uses a personal testimony to illustrate the philosophies' real-world implications, recounting how reading Rand's work served as an unintended catalyst for his own religious conversion. By seeing a reflection of his own life in her philosophy, he was "horrified" and set on a path to find a deeper truth about human existence. The central argument is that no middle ground exists between these two worldviews;

one cannot compartmentalize life by operating on objectivist principles in the secular world while claiming to be a disciple of Christ. The document concludes by outlining the call for Christians to live a wholly integrated life, rooted in the Eucharist and an imitation of God, in preparation for the ultimate judgment discussed in the day's Gospel reading.

1. Introduction: A Philosophical Framework for Judgment

The homily frames its theological message within a philosophical conflict, using the lens of Ayn Rand's Objectivism to explore the Gospel themes of judgment, persecution, and perseverance. The central question posed, prompted by scripture readings focused on "judgment and the four last things," is: "Does any of it matter?" The analysis asserts that the choice between the worldviews articulated by Ayn Rand and the Catholic Church is not an abstract exercise but a fundamental decision with eternal consequences, defining how one thinks, chooses, and acts.

The speaker notes that while many in the church "strive to straddle both sides of this divide," a middle ground is impossible to find. The core challenge is for individuals to identify the "underlying philosophy of our own thoughts" and determine "Whose lead are we following?"

2. The Two Opposing Worldviews: A Direct Comparison

The central tension of the homily is the fundamental opposition between Ayn Rand's philosophy and the teachings of the Catholic Church, particularly as articulated by Pope Paul VI in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* ("On the Development of Peoples").

Feature	Ayn Rand's Objectivism	Catholic Christian Worldview (as presented)
Primary Absolute	Reason	God's will and love
Moral Purpose	One's own happiness	Love of God, neighbor, and self (as defined by God)
Noblest Activity	Productive achievement	Sacrifice, service, and living in imitation of Christ (<i>imitatio Dei</i>)
View of Self-Interest	The highest moral aim; pursued rationally by trading "value for value."	A danger that leads to avarice, materialism, and "stultified moral development."
View of Sacrifice	Opposed; contrary to self-interest.	Central to the Christian life, following the example of Christ.
Human Relationships	A social contract based on trading value.	Based on friendship, love, and service rather than self-interest.
Ultimate Goal	A prosperous life on earth driven by individual achievement.	Union with God; readiness for judgment and the "eternal banquet."

2.1. Ayn Rand's Objectivism: The Philosophy of Self

Ayn Rand, described as an "intellectual persecutor" and "self-avowed enemy of faith," developed Objectivism as "a philosophy for living on earth."

Core Tenets: Her philosophy is summarized by her own words: "the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute."

Rational Selfishness: Rand advocated for a specific kind of selfishness, distinct from thoughtless victimization. It involves:

- Following reason, not "whims or faith."
- Working hard to achieve a purposeful and productive life.
- Earning genuine self-esteem.
- Treating others as individuals with whom one trades "value for value."

Rejection of Altruism: The philosophy is fundamentally opposed to any system, particularly religion, that directs human purpose toward goals requiring sacrifice or limits on self-interest. This is captured in the oath of *Atlas Shrugged* character John Galt: **"I swear, by my life and my love of it, that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine."**

2.2. The Christian Worldview: The Call to Look Beyond Self

Pope Paul VI's encyclical provides the direct counterpoint to Objectivism, warning against the spiritual dangers of materialism.

The Danger of Materialism: The Pope wrote that while the pursuit of life's necessities is legitimate, the acquisition of worldly goods can devolve into greed and a soul-stifling materialism.

The Two-Edged Sword of Progress: The encyclical states:

Consequences of Avarice: When material possession becomes the ultimate objective, the result is hardened hearts, disunity, and dissension. The encyclical concludes that the "exclusive pursuit of material possessions prevents man's growth as a human being and stands in opposition to his true grandeur." It labels avarice as "the most obvious form of stultified moral development."

3. Rand's Critique of the Papal Encyclical

Ayn Rand's reaction to *Populorum Progressio* was one of intense opposition. She viewed the Church's teachings as a direct assault on humanity's highest values.

An Attack on the Human Mind: Rand claimed the encyclical's "dominant chord" was a "hatred for man's mind — hence hatred for man — hence hatred for life and for this earth." She saw it as a consequential "hatred for the only social system that makes all these values possible in practice: capitalism."

A Return to the Dark Ages: She described the encyclical in stark terms:

Faith and Force vs. Reason and Freedom: Rand argued that Western civilization was failing to resolve the "lethal contradiction" between individualism and altruism. In her view, **"When men give up reason and freedom, the vacuum is filled by faith and force."**

4. Personal Testimony: A Catalyst for Conversion

Father Blair presents a personal narrative in which Ayn Rand's philosophy, contrary to her intention, played a critical role in his conversion to Christianity.

Initial Indifference: Before his conversion, the speaker "just didn't care" about God's existence, stating, "I believed in me."

A Horrifying Realization: Upon reading Rand's books, he saw a direct reflection of himself. He describes the experience: "And it horrified me because deep in my soul, I knew that what she had spelled out in black and white, it wasn't who I wanted to be, and it wasn't who I knew I should be. I knew that human life ought not to be like this."

A "Great Awakening": This realization was a pivotal moment, a "brilliant move on the part of God." It did not cause an instantaneous conversion but rather "corrected my course, in the search for truth, what it meant to be a human being in the world." This new path ultimately made it possible for him "to see and hear the living God."

The "Ayn Rand" in Everyone: The speaker concludes that "all of us have a little bit of Ayn Rand in us that needs to go" to live with the awareness of God's presence and the reality of future judgment.

5. The Final Choice: Integration Over Compartmentalization

The homily's central call to action is to reject the temptation to merge these two philosophies and instead choose to live a "wholly integrated" Christian life.

The Impossibility of a Hybrid Philosophy: It is asserted that one "cannot live in part or whole, according to Rand's philosophy... while at the same time being a full-on disciple of Christ. It just doesn't work."

Danger of Compartmentalization: A specific warning is issued against living an "objectivist way in our professional lives and relationships with strangers" while attempting to live as a Christian in private life. This divided approach ignores the reality that there will be a final judgment covering one's entire life.

Living an Authentic Faith: An authentic faith is one that "embraces our whole life" and "becomes a criterion for our decisions." This requires persevering in what is right even "when the logic of evil seems to prevail."

The Role of the Eucharist: Participation in the Mass and receiving the Eucharist is central to becoming an integrated person. Citing Pope Benedict XVI's analysis in his *Jesus of Nazareth* series, the homily explains that the Lord's Prayer request for "our daily bread" (*epiousios*) is a multi-layered plea for both earthly sustenance and the "Bread for the future"—the Eucharist.

The Assurance of Victory: The Christian life is presented not as easy but as one where victory is assured through perseverance. By striving to live in "imitatio Dei" (the imitation of God) and fighting to be more like Christ daily, a Christian will be ready for judgment, because "you will have loved."