



Friday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

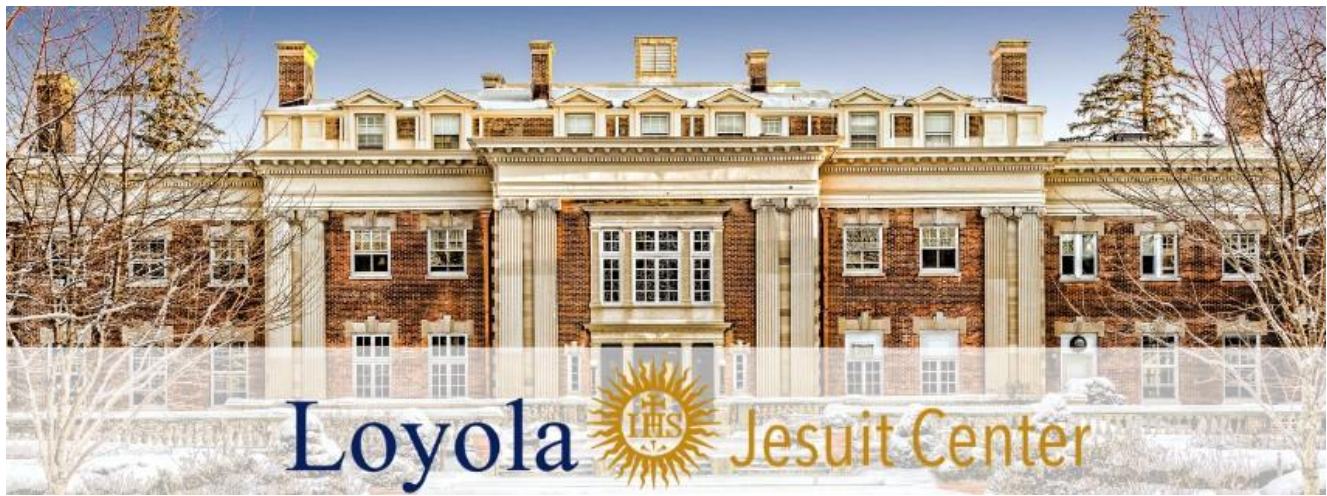
Today's Readings [Here](#).

Jenny Hubert

In the first reading today, John advises a “chosen lady” on how to love one another and remain valiant against deceivers. We know little about this woman—many suggest she was a leader who followed Jesus or the Church herself—but John’s message is clear: Follow Jesus’s commandment to love one another, and avoid the voices of the world that say otherwise. Even though John is addressing a chosen lady, there is much for us to gain in reading this letter as well.

With tumultuous political tensions, growing wealth gaps, and the highest marginalization of the voiceless we’ve ever seen, Jesus is calling us to love one another more than ever. John implies in his letter that this task is not easy, as forces often rise up desiring to prove us wrong; these forces will even convert the hearts of our loved ones. Sometimes, it feels like the most tragic thing in the world when a loved one disagrees with us on such a fundamental principle! But in Luke 14:33, Jesus calls us to “leave everything you have,” including our brothers and sisters, to follow Him. That doesn’t necessarily mean to stop communication with them; rather, it means to follow Jesus and love others *despite* what they think of us.

On this Friday, the weekday of Jesus’s death, let us remember active forces desire for us to fall away from God. This is not meant to discourage us but meant to validate our efforts; making Jesus the center of our lives is difficult. Remember, many thought (and still think) Jesus’s death meant His ministry was a failure. But He rose from the dead, proving He is the Son of God. He knows being a disciple is not easy, but that’s why the reward is so great.



Friday of the First Week of Advent

Today's Readings can be found [Here](#).

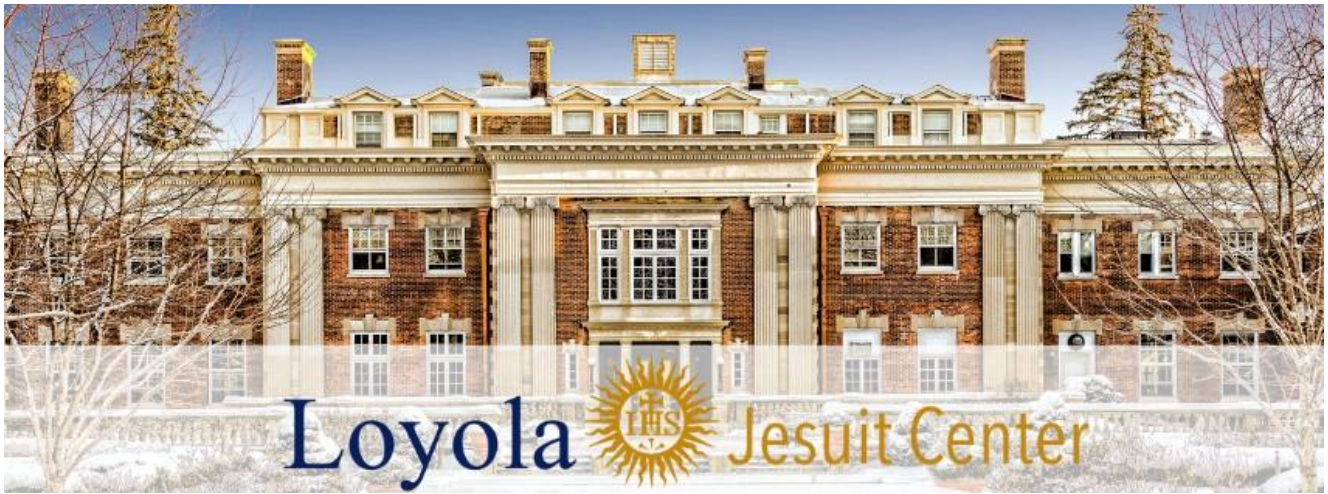
Jenny Hubert

Whether I'm clocking into work on a Monday evening, sitting by the window in a friend's dining room, or watching a neighbor squeeze in yardwork before sunset, the same timely topic has come up almost every day—"it gets dark so early now!" Indeed, the sun sets just before 4:30 p.m., making the temperature plummet earlier, lowering our visibility during commutes, and perhaps impacting our mood.

I typically dread the approach of winter for these very reasons. But today's readings remind me that darkness will not last forever. In Matthew's Gospel, the blind men receive an end to their darkness. We don't know how long they were blind for and how long they'd been hoping to be healed, but they had faith in Jesus to heal them and He brought them to light in His perfect timing. We are no exception; we might not suffer from physical blindness, but Jesus can heal us from our other wounds, too, and bring us back into the light.

These readings also remind me I don't have to white-knuckle my way through darkness either. As much as I dislike it, darkness is necessary for growth, and this season, I am trying my best to welcome it. I cannot help but point out that the darkest day of the year, December 21, always falls right before Jesus's birth. If that darkness and loneliness Mary and Joseph experienced before she gave birth were necessary for the light of Jesus, then I will ask Him to grant me the grace of patience to accept these circumstances.

On these cold, dreary days when I miss the sun, I offer my sufferings to God and listen to His comforting words.



Friday of the Third Week of Advent

Today's Readings can be found [here](#).

Jenny Hubert

Silent or Speak?

I had the blessed opportunity to attend my first retreat at the Loyola Jesuit Center in 2+ years—praise God—and I'm thankful to report I had a joyful, God-filled experience with my fellow 38 retreatants. During our first talk of the retreat, Fr. Tom Marciniak said, "Salvation is about silence," urging us to be active listeners throughout the weekend. In my retreat experience, I found his words to be accurate—because I opened my heart to God, I discovered that I needed to invite the grace of joy into my life. Once again, praise God!

Then to my surprise, in today's first reading, God tells Ahaz to request a sign from him. Even when Ahaz replies with humility that he will not "tempt the Lord," God insists on showing His power. Wait, what? Didn't I just spend a whole weekend learning that silence is the best way to deepen my relationship with God?

However, this isn't the only place in the Bible where God tells us to petition him. When Jesus teaches the Apostles how to pray, Jesus includes a verse about petitioning: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Later, in Matthew 7:7, Jesus says, "Ask, and it will be given you."

Long before this retreat, I learned and accepted that God wants to bless me with abundance. But then how do I avoid treating him like some faraway wish-granter?

To answer this question, I think about my relationships with my best friends. If I did most of the talking in our relationships, there wouldn't be much room for us to engage, right? The same goes if I only listened to everything my friends had to say—my friends would want to know what I think. Therefore, there must be a balance between talking and listening for our relationships to grow.

When I started this retreat, I was certain I would tackle one of my deeper insecurities, telling God how I think it started, how I might confront it, etc. But after Fr. Tom said, "Salvation is about silence," I opened my heart to listen. And that's when God put the grace of joy on my heart instead. Near the end of the weekend, I responded by writing in my journal, "Welcome, Joy, back into my heart."