

Homily of Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C, 2022

Malachi 3:19-20; Psalm 98:5-9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12; Luke 21:5-19

The Church's Liturgical Year ends next Sunday with the celebration of the solemnity of Our Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe. Like last Sunday, the readings of this Sunday invite us to continue our reflection on end of time, judgement, and afterlife. The Four Last Things, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are "Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell."

In the first reading, Prophet Malachi re-emphasized some themes that run through the entire Scripture. First, those who lived wicked lives while on earth would not go unpunished. Prophet Malachi's description is frightening, "the day that is coming will set them on fire..." Second, for those who lived righteous lives, "there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays."

There are people who do not believe that there is life after death, or there is judgement and reward at the end of earthly life. We know the fundamental truth; our actions have rewards or consequences. Is it not foolishness to exclude this fundamental truth to what happens at the end of our earthly life? For us who believe the Scripture, since we look towards meeting God at the end of life, and seeing him as he truly is, let us make the effort to live life that will lead us to him.

In the second reading, some Thessalonians misunderstood the meaning of the second coming of Christ. They took the "coming soon of Christ" literally; and for that reason, felt that there was no need to work. Since "an idle mind is the devil's workshop" they were conducting themselves in disorderly ways. St. Paul warned them, "If anyone was unwilling to work, neither should he eat." It is true that there are people who want to eat but refuse to work. There are people who reap where they did not sow. There are people who cheat, steal, rob, and kill others to eat. It is to such people Jesus says that they will perish, unless they repent (Luke 13:3). But for us believers, let us fight the good fight, run the good race, keep the faith, and wait for the crown of righteousness the Righteous Judge will award us on that day (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

In the Gospel, Jesus prophesied about the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem; "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." This prophecy, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem took place in 70 A.D. We can interpret that we represent the temple. And the truth is that at a time, every life will have an end. When we hear about the end of the world, our immediate expectation should not be the day when the world will come to an end. Our attention needs to be on the end of everyone's life which, as we know, can be at any moment. The important questions are: Are we fighting the good fight? Are we running the good race? Are we keeping the faith? At the end of our earthly life, St. Paul writes, "each of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

Jesus warned us in the Gospel about the emergence of false prophets and fake pastors who would use the various disasters and afflictions which occur to people and in places as weapons to frighten and terrorize people. Jesus says, "See that you are not deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them..." Nowadays, false prophets and fake pastors are everywhere deceiving, cheating, abusing, extorting, and stealing from those who do not listen to Jesus' warning. Jesus encourages us that afflictions, disasters, and persecution should lead to our giving testimony. Jesus says in the Gospel, "By your perseverance you will secure your lives." For those who persevere, trials are channels of blessings.

Unfortunately, some people are afraid or reluctant to reflect about death or make some necessary preparations concerning their death. Reluctance or fear does not remove the reality which faces all of us; everyone will die, sooner or later. No one is sure what awaits him or her. Philosopher Martin Heidegger says, "As soon as we are born, we are old enough to die." Therefore, getting oneself ready for this reality cannot be over emphasized. Is there a Will to be written? Are there records to be made straight? Is there information to be shared? Are there property or money to be allocated? Are there arrangements to be made? Are there issues to be attended to or be resolved? And so on. Physical preparation is, equally, very important so that at the end of one's life, those left behind are not left in the dark.

The Lord says to each one of us, "'Behold, I am coming like a thief.' Blessed is the one who watches and keeps his clothes ready, so that he may not go naked and people see him exposed" (Revelation 16:15).

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