

Homily of 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

We are coming to the end the Church's Liturgical Year and the Roman Calendar Year. The Church's Liturgical Year ends with the week of Christ the King or Thirty Fourth Sunday, and the Roman Calendar Year ends with December. The readings for Mass for the next two weeks invite us to reflect about death and to prepare for it. Death is no respecter of persons. The sword of death dangles over each one of us, from the baby in the womb to the oldest person alive. It is a matter of time when it bears down on us, one by one. This is a reality we all must accept. Ecclesiastes 3:2 says, "There is a time for everything, ... a time to be born and a time to die." The warning, therefore, is, "Be prepared," because, as Jesus says in the Gospel, "the day or hour, no one knows, ... but only the father." Death can be any moment or any day.

There are people who are so distressed that prefer death to life, and there are some people due to their distress, they want to take their own life. But as believers, we pray to live a purposeful life and see the goodness of the Lord. We pray, also, to experience a happy death.

Jesus says in the Gospel, "And then they will see the Son of Man in the clouds with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky." The first reading says, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some will live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace." We pray to be among the elect who will be gathered by the angels and who will live forever.

The first reading and the Gospel tell us about the end of the world. Does it mean that there will be such a time the world will come to an end? The world has existed for 4.543 billion years. It is, rather, more helpful if we pay attention to the end of our individual world, which occurs every day, than the end of a world that has lasted for 4.453 billion years.

There are two important ways of preparing for the end of life. They are physical preparation and spiritual preparation.

Physical preparation means to put in place a clear will or testament to prevent any form of misinterpretation and disagreement when one dies. It may be necessary to do this in a legal way to make life easy for the living. This needs to be done while the individual is hale and hearty. This will prevent fights over the deceased property.

Spiritual preparation means to live a life here on earth that will lead us to everlasting life. The first reading tells us that there is judgement after death, "some will live forever, others shall be in an everlasting horror and disgrace." A sure way to live forever in the presence of God is to live a good Christian life while in the mortal body. For those who spiritually prepare themselves for death, the Preface 1 of the Mass of the Dead promises, "In him the hope of blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come. Indeed, for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven."

There are people who do not believe in the existence of heaven and hell or any form of life after physical death. About such people Jesus says, "Hypocrites! You interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't interpret the present time?" (Luke 12:56). Every culture has some form of punishment or another for those who commit offense, and good reward for good work. How then does anyone deny any form of punishment or good reward in the afterlife? In addition to the teaching of the Bible about hell, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "The chief punishment of hell is the eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs" (CCC 1035).

For us believers, let us live our lives in joyful hope for the coming of our savior Jesus Christ who promises us in John 14:1-3, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." St. Paul, also, encourages us, "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him; this God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

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