

Homily, 33rd Sunday Yr C

Malachi 3:20, the last line of the first reading is a powerful prayer for all of us: "But for you who fear my name, there will arise the Sun of Justice with its healing rays." We contemplate healing rays shining forth from the altar upon us. Although we are unable to see it with our physical eyes, it is there. We contemplate healing rays from the Eucharist and the Chalice when are raised up during consecration. We not only contemplate the healing rays, we need to experience it. We not only experience it, we share it with someone. And tell the person, "Come also and experience!"

The Gospel sounds gloomy. Jesus talks about disaster and destruction. It appears frightening. The passage was the prophecy of Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem that took place forty years later in 70 AD. Jesus was priest, prophet and king. We will celebrate Christ the King next Sunday. The Gospel passage is also known as signs of the end time. Since this prophecy of Jesus people and individuals, considering various calamities that happen around the world, conclude wrongly the end of the world. That was the reason why St Paul, in the second reading, wrote to the Thessalonians who concluded that the end of the world was near, and for that reason, there was no need to work. St Paul instructed that anyone who was unwilling to work should not eat. Some of them were unwilling to work, but were willing to mind the business of others. If all of us will mind our business, the world will be a better place!

About the end of the world, there are two kinds. The first kind is when everything will come to an end. Nobody knows, and nobody can predict. Jesus himself said that he did not know. The second kind is the end of individual world, which happens every day. We are, therefore, invited to be ready. St Augustine says that if we love him, we should not be afraid of his coming.

Did Jesus invite us to Mass today to frighten us with a gloomy gospel and message? No. I would rather think that Jesus is addressing individuals who are going through hard times. I interpret wars, insurrection, earthquakes, famines, plagues and persecution in the passage to mean tribulations in our life. Jesus gives us hope in the Gospel that tribulations will lead our giving testimony. St Paul writes in Romans 5:3-5, "affliction produces endurance, and endurance proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint." Jesus says in the Gospel, "not a hair of your head will be destroyed... by your perseverance you will secure your lives." Jesus is saying, in times of tribulations, hold forth, persevere, do not give up. Prophet Malachi says in the first reading, for those who persevere, the sun of justice will shine its rays over them. The light of the sun of justice will show us the way to follow. Amen.

Maybe God is speaking to someone who is about to make a major decision of given up, of throwing in the towel, of walking away. James 1:12 says, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him." We are invited today to persevere in trusting God, in prayer, in holding forth and in our efforts and endeavors, especially when we think our world is falling apart. At this time, your grip need to be firmer! Remember, for those who perseveres, Jesus says, your tribulations will leading to your giving testimony. Your perseverance will win you your life.

Today, we are invited to the virtue of perseverance. A dictionary explains perseverance as a steady course of action especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles or discouragements. Perseverance does not mean absence of failure. My understanding is that failure is not a dead end but inability to persevere and keep moving forward.

Some helpful quotations on perseverance:

·Don't be discouraged. It's often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock. – Unknown

·If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving. – Martin Luther King, Jr

·Through perseverance many people win success out of what seemed destined to be certain failure. - Burrhus Frederic Skinner

·Many of life's failures are people who did not know how close they were to success when they gave up. – Thomas Edison

·Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines. – Robert Schuller

·When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on. – Franklin Roosevelt

·If you fell down yesterday, stand up today. – Herbert George Wells

So keep trusting God, keep praying, keep holding forth, and keep moving. Do not give in to despair. God will do the rest. May the sun of justice shine its rays upon us, heal us, strengthen us, and show us the way to follow. Amen.

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