

Homily of Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, 2021

Daniel 12:1-3; Psalm 16:5, 8-11; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32

We are coming to the end of the Church's Liturgical Year. The Church's Liturgical Year ends with the week of Christ the King (Thirty-Fourth Sunday), after which the Advent Season begins.

Today's readings invite us to reflect about death and its reality. It 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." Therefore, we are invited to be spiritually and physically prepared. Jesus says in the gospel, "But that day or the hour, no one knows, ... only the Father" (Mark 13:32).

When we talk about the end of the world, do we mean that there will be such a time when the world will come to an end? The world has existed for over 4.54 billion years. It is, rather, more helpful if we pay attention to the end of our individual world, which occurs every day, than worry so much about the end of the world that has lasted for over 4.54 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 grant the document legal authenticity. Are there insurance contracts, other deals and businesses that need to be made known? These, and many more, need to be done while the individual is hale and hearty to prevent unnecessary wrangling over the deceased's property and intentions.

Spiritual preparation means to live a life here on earth that will lead us to everlasting life. The first reading and the gospel tell us that there is judgement after death. "Some will live forever, others shall be in an everlasting horror and disgrace" (Daniel 12:3). "And he will send out his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky" (Mark 13:27). A sure way to be one of the elects (saints) and 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, "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."

May our life be as St. Paul says of himself, "My eager expectation and hope is that I shall not be put to shame in any way, but that with all boldness, now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me life is Christ, and death is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21).

There are people who do not believe that there is any form of life after physical death, and do not believe in the existence of heaven and hell. 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 people and every culture have 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).

Whether God grants us a long life or a short life, may he grant us the grace of a happy death by which death has no sting and no victory over us (1 Corinthians 15:55). May St. Joseph, patron of a happy death, pray for us. Amen.

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