

Homily of Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

The Church's Liturgical Year ends next Sunday with the celebration of the solemnity of Our Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe. As of last Sunday, the readings of this Sunday invite us to continue our reflection on the Christian understanding of the end of the world.

In the first reading, Prophet Malachi re-emphasized some themes that run through the entire Scripture; first, that those who lived wicked lives while on earth would not go unpunished. Prophet Malachi put it in a very gruesome way, "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." Many people do not believe that there is life after death, or there are judgement and reward at the end of earthly life. I consider it foolishness to disregard these themes that run through the entire Scripture. Ordinarily, we believe that our actions have rewards or consequences. It is foolishness, also, to exclude what follows at the end of our earthly life from this principle. 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." Therefore, we believers, while on earth, are to fight good fight, run good race, keep the faith, and wait for the crown of righteousness the Righteous Judge will award us on that day. Not only to us, "but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (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 took place in 70 A.D. The temple represents each one of us and the world. The meaning of the words of Jesus is that at some point in time every life has an end. When we hear about the end of the world, our immediate expectation, however, is not to look forward to the day when the world will come to an end. Our attention, always, need 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 good fight? Are we running good race? Are we keeping the faith? St. Paul writes, "So then, 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 that 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 have not heeded 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 salvation.

Unfortunately, some people are reluctant to reflect about death or make some necessary preparations concerning their death. A reality that faces us is that everyone will die, sooner or later. Some people may live a long life. Some people may live a short life. No one is sure what awaits him or her. Therefore, getting oneself ready for this inevitability cannot be over emphasized. Are there records to be made straight? Are 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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