

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time B - We Do Not Need to Know When the End Will Come. Though sounds gloom and doom, in us, Lord, is our hope. We shall never hope in vain.

November 14, 2021.

Sisters and brothers, this Sunday's readings are full of gloom and doom. The first reading from the *Book of Daniel* (12:1-3) talks about the end of time being a time of unsurpassed stress where some who die shall be in everlasting horror and disgrace. The Gospel reading from the Apocalyptic sections of *Mark* presents the end of time as being the day of tribulations, when the earth will shake and even the stars will fall out of the sky. Scary stuff, these end of the world readings. But are they? Look again at that first reading: *Daniel* prophesies that many will live forever. The wise will shine brightly like the splendour of the firmament and those who lead the many to justice will be like the stars forever. And in *Mark* Jesus adds, ***the elect will be gathered from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.*** ***These readings give us hope and encouragement in life's difficulties. The great truth of the gospel is that God's love has triumphed over the power of evil and will put all things right.***

Pope Benedict XVI made this point powerfully in his second encyclical, ***Spe salvi***, published in 2007, which is all about the **great Christian virtue of hope**. None of the other ancient, influential religious and cultural traditions of the world have the same vision of human history as the Judeo-Christian vision. Most of the eastern religions view human history as circular, an endless repetition of the same. Buddhism, for example, uses the phrase "the wheel of rebirth" to describe existence in the universe. It's an endless and meaningless cycle of the same. The ancient pagan religions viewed human history, subsequent to the golden age of the mythological origins of their societies, as pessimistic, inferior, dying reality, like the inevitable winding down clock.

Throughout the history of Christianity, many groups have broken away from the Church precisely because they were impatient with our Lord's refusal to give details on this issue. They wanted to be able to determine the exact time and place of Christ's second coming and the end of history. Today, one of the fastest-growing heretical and most active sects continues to make this kind of prediction, the Jehovah's Witnesses. Also known as the Watchtower Society. When we were in Calgary, the Jehovah's witnesses members came in pair to our door at around 10am almost every Saturday morning. I always welcomed them inside the house and challenged and argued with them on their doctrine versus the Catholic one for at least an hour, sometimes two. Finally they gave up and gave us a copy of the Watchtower magazine and left. This made my day. Although they use Bibles and claim to be Christians, they deny most of the basic doctrines of the Creed, like the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the reality of grace, and the existence of Hell. One of the characteristic aspects of their doctrine has to do with predicting the end of the world. The Founder, Charles Russell (died in 1916) and his successors predicted and prepared for Jesus to come again in 1914, in 1925, then at the end of World War II, then moved the date to 1975, and still another to 1989. And I will not be surprised that with the current COVID-19 pandemic, their date could be this or next year. It is good for us as Catholics, members of the Church that Jesus himself founded, to be grateful that Christ's own Church has preserved the true doctrine: that **Christ will come again to bring history to its close, and that we should live every day with that in mind.**

Jesus wants us to live each day of our lives to the full, loving God and loving our neighbor. That's why he doesn't tell us exactly when the end of history will come, just as he doesn't tell us exactly when our own death will come. It is enough for us to know that it

could be today. We can all check what our relationship with God is like and where our hearts and values lie. Christ comes to us each day offering us his life and inviting us to his side. Judgement is happening all the time. Every time we hear an ambulance siren, we are reminded that the world has come to an end for someone. Every time we drive past a cemetery, it is an opportunity for us to take stock of our own lives, to change whatever needs to be changed so that we can die with no regrets. **But the early Christians did not look at the Second Coming and end of time with terror. Instead they saw it as a time when the Lord would return to his people and correct the injustices of the world.** In the old world, little children were starving to death while rich people ate heartily. The conquering Romans, like the Greeks and Persians before them, had no respect for any life other than their own and killed the population of whole cities, men, women and children viciously and randomly. This is not what God created the world to be. **The world was suffering from sin. Therefore, the Christians prayed, "Come, Lord Jesus, Maranatha. Come and recreate your world into your image."** The world has not changed all that much in its barbarity. People are still killed for who they are. We are still receiving accounts of genocide throughout the world. And children are still hungry, still starving to death in Africa, South America, and, really, throughout the world. **But for us true Christians, with the Lord, there is always hope if we repent and sin no more.**

We Catholics recite both the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. **"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting, Amen"** (Apostles Creed). And in the month of November, we Catholics can obtain and gain a Plenary Indulgence. The faithful must be in the state of grace and have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin. We must: 1. receive the sacrament of confession, (I strongly believe that the **Confession is the Spiritual water that wash us from our iniquities and cleanse us from our sins**), 2. receive the Holy Eucharist, and 3. recite prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father (and one Our Father and one Hail Mary is suggested as a minimum). All attachment to sin, even venial sin, must be absent. If some of the above conditions are not fulfilled, the indulgence becomes partial.

Sisters and brothers, still feeling gloom and doom? Let's finish off with some fun and I am sure it will make your day. Jock, the painter, often would thin his paint so it would go further and hence profit more.. So when the Church decided to do some deferred maintenance, Jock was able to put in the low bid, and got the job. As always, he thinned his paint way down with turpentine. One day while he was up on the scaffolding -- the job almost finished -- he heard a horrendous clap of thunder, and the sky opened. The downpour washed the thinned paint off the church and knocked Jock off his scaffold and onto the lawn among the gravestones and puddles of thinned and worthless paint. **Jock knew this was a warning from the Almighty, so he got on his knees and cried: "Oh, God! Forgive me! What should I do?" And from the thunder, a mighty voice: "REPAINT! REPAINT! AND THIN NO MORE!". Amen.**