

## Cycle B 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1, Dn 12:1-3

In those days, I Daniel, heard this word of the Lord: "At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time. At that time your people shall escape, everyone who is found written in the book. "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace. "But the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

**R. (1) You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

O LORD, my allotted portion and my cup, you it is who hold fast my lot. I set the LORD ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

**R. You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices, my body, too, abides in confidence; because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

**R. You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

You will show me the path to life, fullness of joys in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.

**R. You are my inheritance, O Lord!**

Reading II, Heb 10:11-14, 18

Brothers and sisters: Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin.

Gospel, Mk 13:24-32

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming 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. "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

In these final weeks of the Church year we hear some vivid and frightening apocalyptic scriptures about the eschaton, the end times. They are a vision of the final struggle of humanity at the end of times and our subsequent resurrection; either a life of horror or a life of glory. They are a message of challenge, and hope. Apocalyptic scripture is a literary style designed to give severe warning to the oppressors, encourage and give hope to the oppressed, and it always looks ahead to the time when God will triumph. The problem I have is that when I first read these apocalyptic scriptures, I just didn't feel God's love. They are difficult to interpret, so it's hard to read them and then NOT fearfully imagine we are in the end times. All around us, the world is overwhelmed by immense challenges—life threatening violence, illness, starvation, displacement, and a shared longing for peace and justice. These are heavy times, and feelings of anxiety, powerlessness, and despair are deeply felt by many around the world. So what's the answer, "Life is hard and then we die?" Well, I don't buy that! I think the answer is in today's Gospel, when Jesus tells us that all things are in God's loving hands. His love reigned over chaos at the time of creation, so too will He reign at the end of time...in His heavenly creation! The lesson to be learned is "Be Prepared!"

The famous theologian C. S. Lewis tells us that *"God whispers to us in our pleasures, He speaks to us in our conscience, but He shouts to us in our pain...suffering is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."* The Scriptures today shout at us so we will wake up to hear their message of warning and hope...and to do something with great love! God loves us so much that His son Jesus suffered and died once...and..for..all, paying the price for our sins. And He promised that at the end of time He will return.... Good will triumph over evil. Jesus never said life would be easy, He said He would be with us always. And He said, "follow me!"

So, today, this day, this moment, is the time to lean into God's love. Believe me, I'm an old guy...78 years old...I have seen this before, and I see God's love everywhere. Good is

winning! His kingdom has begun! Yes, it may get worse...but it's not the end until God says so. And it will get better again! We need to seize the day, be His hands and feet caring for others around us. We shouldn't shrink away, paralyzed in our despair. God knows...the world needs us! Our lives and the lives of those around us can be better only if we trust in God....Maybe in the world's pain He's shouting to wake us up so we can live prepared for the end by doing something today "for the Love of God!"....if we hold onto Jesus, confident He is with us, loving us...we will wake up every day to be Eucharist for the world, being the Body of Christ caring for each other, so we all will be prepared, no matter what comes our way.

I would like to tell you a true story about the Boettcher family; mother, father and two young daughters, who emigrated from Germany to the United States around the year 1900. The oldest daughter Frieda could always remember living as a child in Berlin and looking down from a 2<sup>nd</sup> story window seeing soldiers riding on horses past their apartment. They came through Ellis Island and settled in South Dakota. The family owned a store and a boarding house for traveling workers. Life could not have been that easy. 11 years later disaster struck. The youngest daughter Emma was pregnant. The family was so scandalized that they immediately sold the business and moved to upper Saskatchewan, Canada. They bought a square mile of land for a \$1 land grant and settled just outside the town of Prince Albert, 60 miles north of Saskatoon. It's in the boonies today, imagine what it was back then. On Christmas Day 1911 a baby boy was born. The winter was so brutally cold the family legend was that the baby was wrapped up in a blanket and was placed in a turkey pan on the open door of the wood burning oven to keep him warm. Over 110 years ago that 16 year old single-mother Emma, her baby and the Boettcher family were truly living a time of unsurpassed distress....and I have no doubt that they were holding onto Jesus for dear life prepared for the worst, knowing that life as they knew it had ended..... But then, during the next 2 1/2 years some things happened: Emma was married...Tony her husband adopted her son...they had a daughter Kay, and the babies were baptized at the Catholic Sacred Heart Cathedral in Prince Albert....once again,

life as they knew it had ended, this time for the better. You might have guessed, the baby boy was my father...I never met my Grandma Emma, but I grew up knowing my Grandpa Fraser and Aunt Kay...and I met my Great Aunt Frieda on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The constant challenge of our lives is to live sensibly at all times....we think that means to be in control. But when irrational things and events throw our lives into turmoil, being in control of anything let alone most things can be difficult if not impossible.

Our lives can be made more joyful and much better, or more difficult, depending on what we are holding onto. If we are holding onto Jesus, we can work through the most difficult times and we will be drawn into that future beyond all futures...the endless love of eternity with Jesus Christ and our loved ones. If we are still grasping at all the things of this world, however, then we may end up living in hopeless struggle.

A sensible life is to take each day and live as Jesus taught us, as decently as we can, as loving as we can, helping others get through their day, and being kinder than necessary....because we know that everyone we meet is fighting some kind of battle. Today, this day, this moment is the time to lean into God's love. Trust me, I'm an old guy...I've seen this before. Good is winning! God knows, the world needs us to be Eucharist, to be the Body of Christ caring for each other so we are all prepared, no matter what comes our way! Amen

[If I could take another minute, I would like to tell you how my father's story ended. 22 years ago, it was 4 months after he attended my ordination, he died in the lobby of his Lutheran Church after having communion. I didn't know he was baptized Catholic until we found the certificate going through his personal effects. At his funeral, I asked the minister if I could assist and do anything. He declined my help which turned out to be the right decision. I was in no shape emotionally to read or even lead a prayer during the service. But then afterwards, the minister approached me saying that the cemetery was a two-hour drive away and he couldn't go there and get back in time for another service...he asked if I could do the grave side committal? The funeral director was Catholic and was prepared with the Order of Christian Funerals book, the Holy Water and a Deacon stole. I like to say that my Dad was baptized Catholic and I buried him Catholic, but during his life he wandered around a little.☺]