

## 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 2021B

**"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)**

In a previous homily I shared with you an experience I had up north where I was told that if I returned to a certain village I would be killed. Three months later I was sent back to that village and as I mounted the steps to the airport terminal the mayor, who was carrying his rifle, got up close and personal and said to me, "You're a dead man." That experience has forced me to think about death and that we definitely do not know when we will be called home to the Father. My homily today is the result of some of my pondering on the end of life.

A Japanese airliner crashed and 520 people perished. In the debris, the search group found a pocket calendar of a Japanese businessman with hastily written notes. "We're not going to make it; I'm sad." To his family he wrote: "To think that our dinner last night was the last time we would be together."

To his three children he wrote: "Be good, work hard, and help your mother." The end came suddenly like a thief in the night.

The point of Jesus' remarks today is the same. None of us knows when the end of our life, or all of life on earth, will come. Therefore, we must be prepared always. We accept that, in a



general sort of way, but it really doesn't bother us. Our concerns are more immediate.

Somebody once said that for every person who is worried about the end of the world, there must be at least 10,000 who aren't. This is probably accurate. The challenge facing most of us is how to deal with life as it is, right now, today.

What then, do these end-time Scripture readings have to do with people like us? We don't have to dig very deep before we find all kinds of people whose hearts are devoid of hope.

How many people do you know who look to tomorrow with hope and expectancy? Cynicism has become a symbol for the mood of the day. Optimism is regarded as something reserved for those too blind to see or too weak to handle the realities of life.

There was a cartoon about four golfers on the eighteenth green, about to finish. In the background was a skyline of a city, and above it, a mushroom cloud caused by an atomic explosion.

Underneath was the caption, "Go ahead and putt.

The shock waves won't hit us for a least thirty seconds."

Our world, our country is full of troubled uncertainties.

In the midst of this doubt and insecurity the truth is clear. If you and I are to face the future with anything akin to hope, we must find that hope within it. This is today's gospel theme.

There are those who believe that the words of today's gospel refer specifically and exclusively to the time we are now living in.



But remember, Jesus told his disciples that their generation would not pass away until all these things would be fulfilled. The truth is that no generation passes away without the fulfillment of these things. We live in that kind of world. Jesus told his disciples over 2000 years ago and he is telling us today: Expect trouble.

Do not be surprised by it or resentful of it; it is a part of living. He also indicated that the midst of that trouble is where we most clearly see his "great power and glory." That is the lesson we desperately need to learn. Far too often our outlook on life is nothing but a reaction to current events. If things look good, we are hopeful. If things go badly, we lose heart.

We are like weather vanes, changing with every shift of the wind.

We are optimistic today, and pessimistic tomorrow.

That kind of shifting hope is not worth very much. What we really need is to wrap our minds around something solid, and hold on to that through the fair and foul weather.

Jesus faced the future with hope, because he had something solid to hold on to: the eternal truth of God that can never pass away. You see, real hope is never just a happy mood, borrowed from fortunate circumstances. Real hope, genuine hope, lasting hope is the outgrowth of faith. If a person believes, as Jesus did that this is God's world and the final say belongs to him, then the future is hopeful.

However troubled the present may be, life has a beginning, a middle, and an end. It has a goal, a purpose, and a conclusion. In

other words, it will make sense. Our lives are novels we write while living them. Our lives are journeys with succeeding stages. We dare not get stuck in youthful crises, middle-age malaise, or senior self-pity. We have a goal, a finish line, and a place to go.

It doesn't matter when life ends, whether it ends in the middle of a war or at the consecration of the Mass. All that matters is that we are part of the drama Jesus describes.

So do not let the world pass you by on its way to the end.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Mark 13:31) Nor will those who believe it and whose lives are shaped by that faith pass away.

Deacon Gerry

