**End Times**

All our readings today ask us to engage our passing life by preparing for end times. Our earthly life is a pilgrimage that reaches its point of destination at the moment of death. Once we have passed through this world of time and change, we are limited to the one choice we made during our time in this world. The choice we made while on this earth is either Heaven or Hell.

On one hand, if our choice by using our free will at the moment of death is not eternal life with God, then we choose to spend eternity without God who is the absolute Good. Without the absolute Good, our eternity would be empty and spent in hell.

On the other hand, if our life choices by using our free will at the moment of death leads to eternal life with God, then we will be rewarded with the eternal happiness we have been searching for all our earthly lives. We will be in heaven with the author of life who is the absolute Good. Our search for God will be over because we will fully possess Him for eternity.

In our first reading, God through Prophet Malachi gave us a snap shot of the end of time and change. He told us what will happen to those who are proud and to those who are evil doers. Their end will not be pretty but full of untold suffering. They will be set on fire and left without roots nor branches by that Day that will blaze like an oven fire.

However, for those who fear the Lord, they will be set free by the healing rays of the sun of justice. They will be healed by the sun of justice and justice will be restored to them. Those who fear the Lord are those who love Him and keep His commandments. To them, God will call them and say to them, **Well done, my good and faithful servant... Come, share your master’s joy”** (Matt. 25:23).

When we reflect on our life, we should honestly ask ourselves, in which direction is my life heading right now? If the Messiah were to come back this very minute, where would I stand? Where would He ask me to stand? Am I ready for Him to come now? Or would I say, not yet Lord, come some other time? Just as Prophet Malachi told the Israelites to anticipate the Day of the Lord, we too should anticipate the Day of the Lord by being ‘right’ with God.

In St. Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, Paul instructs them and us on how to conduct our lives so we would be ready for the Day of the Lord. He enjoins us to act orderly. He asks us to treat ourselves with dignity by not leaving off of others but working for our own existence. He sees work as a remedy for gossip and other vices. When we are busy, we will have no time for sinfulness such as idle talk.

I would like to share a story I came across recently. A parishioner told his pastor that he wanted to leave the church because he saw many people gossiping and some using their phones during service. The pastor told him that before he leaves, he wants him to fill a glass with water to the brim and walk around the church without loosing a drop, then he could leave.

The man did that and came back to the pastor beaming because he did not loose a single drop. The pastor then asked him, while you were going around the church did you see anybody gossiping? He said no! Did you see anybody using their phones? He said no! Then the pastor told him, he did not notice those things because he was busy. And should he be busy praying, praising, and worshiping God, he would not see the irreverent things others should not be doing in church. So should we be, so we would be prepared for end times.

Among the many roles ascribed to the Messiah was that of an eschatological Prophet. He started His mission by proclaiming **“...The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel”** (Mark 1:15). It is the same message that He is proclaiming to us today in our gospel.

Jesus told us about international and natural disasters that would happen before end times comes. He also told us about disruptions within the family when members of a family will hand over other members of the family to be persecuted by civil authorities because of their believe in Him.

Jesus tells us in the gospel about all the beautiful things such as the Temple that would be destroyed. Jesus’ warning to us is, we should not turn ‘nature’ and things created by God for our enjoyment to things we hold in high esteem to the extent they become like gods to us. God is the only Person who should be precious to us. All other things will pass into nothingness. Even at the end, our earth would pass, destroyed, and replaced by a new earth. However, Jesus warns us not to be fooled by those who would say they know when the end of the world would come.

As history would tell us, we have had many wars, world wars, numerous volcanoes, and earthquakes for many centuries. There had been famine and pestilence all over the world especially in Africa. Even in our Country, as rich as she is, we have children and adults starving to death. Still the end has not happen. As Jesus told us, only the Father knows when the end of time and change will come.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, is God the only precious Person in our lives? Or do we hold created things as gods?