

17th November 2019 (33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Malachi 3:19-20; Psalm 97(98):5-9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12; Luke 21:5-19.

'Your endurance will win you your lives!'

Towards the end of Jesus' life on earth, and at the end of our liturgical year, we are invited to reflect on the things that are to come. The gospel according to Luke presents Jesus speaking to his disciples about their own suffering, because of his name, of the fall of Jerusalem, and of his second coming at the end of times.

Jesus speaks in an apocalyptic language popular at the time of the writing of the gospel. Very typical of this type of literature is the discourse about the great cosmic events that will happen in the world and in the sky, and talk of the end of times. While the early Christian communities believed that the end of the world was going to be soon, apocalyptic literature was not understood literally. Christians always understood this type of language to be highly symbolic.

Today we struggle to fully understand the message behind this type of literature as we are no longer familiar with this literature. Some people read apocalyptic writing literally and are terrified every time great natural disasters happened. While we know that the end will come for each one of us, this type of language is intended to encourage us and keep us strong in our hope. Indeed, we need to continuously tell ourselves that *'endurance will win us our lives!'*

In this reading Luke speaks of Jesus as a true prophet who, apart from speaking God's word, also predicts the future. The proof of the true prophet is when his predictions come to pass. Jesus predicted that his followers will be persecuted and that the temple of Jerusalem, and indeed the whole city, would be destroyed. Both these events actually happened after the ascension of Jesus. He also predicted that he will come as the Son of Man, at the end of times. Since the first two predictions have been actuated, so we know that this last prediction too will happen.

For each of us, the coming of the Son of Man in glory will happen when we die and are invited to meet God face to face. We do not need to wait for the 'end of the world' to see the Son of God. The question for all of us is how should we be preparing for this all-important meeting?

Being part of the People of God on a pilgrim journey towards God, is a very important part in our preparation. Each year the Church leads us through the main events of the life of Jesus inviting us to model our life on his. Each time we come to the end of another year, we get closer to our aim of becoming image and likeness of the One who created us all. Each time we celebrate the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we get closer to this reality that is God. Each time we read of the beautiful parables talking to us about God's infinite love and mercy, we get to love and respect God more. Our faith-filled loving relationship with God grows deeper each year.

In our pilgrimage here on earth, as we journey year after year, we get tired, often falter and fall. That is part of our human fragility. Yet Jesus reminds us of our need to continue on the journey. If we are faithful and endure the journey, then we will see the Son of Man and be with him in glory.

... Mario