



LIVING THE GOSPEL



Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time – November 15, 2015

Theme: "He will gather his chosen from the four winds"

Gathering Prayer

All: Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Mark 13:24-32

²⁴Jesus said, 'In those days, after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, ²⁵the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; ²⁷then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.

²⁸Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So with you when you see these things happening: know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²'But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father.'

Gospel Notes

24-25 It would seem that at the end of time even irrational creatures will shrink before the Supreme Judge, Jesus Christ, coming in the majesty of his glory, thus fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament (cf Is 13:10; 34:4; Ezek 32:7). Some Fathers, such as St Jerome (*Comm in Matth.*) and St John Chrysostom (*Hom on St Matthew, 77*) understand "the powers in the heavens" to mean the angels, who will be in awe at these events. This interpretation is supported by the liturgical use of describing the angels, taken together, as "virtues caelorum" (cf *Roman Missal, Preface of Martyrs*). But many other commentators think the phrase, like the preceding text, could mean "cosmic forces" or "stars of the firmament."

26-27 Christ here describes his second coming, at the end of time, as announced by the prophet Daniel (7:13). He discloses the deeper meaning of the words of the ancient prophet: the "one like a son of man", whom Daniel saw and to whom "was given

dominion and glory and kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him, "is Jesus Christ himself, who will gather the saints around him.

28-30 As already pointed out in the note on Mark 13:4, Jesus' disciples, following the ideas current among the Jews at the time, could not conceive the destruction of Jerusalem as separate from the end of the world; and, also, there is a connection between the two events, in that the former is the prefigurement of the latter. Our Lord answers his disciples in Mark 13:20 by saying that the destruction of Jerusalem will happen in the lifetime of their generation (as in fact occurred in the year 70, at the hands of the Roman legions). For further explanation of the ruin of Jerusalem as a figure of the end of the world, cf. note on Mt 24:32-35.

31 With this sentence our Lord adds a special solemnity to what he is saying: all this will definitely come to pass. God has only to speak and his words come true, only he who is Lord of the Universe has all existence in his power, and Jesus received from the Father all power over heaven and earth (cf Mt 11:27 and 28:18).

32 Referring to this verse, St Augustine explains (On the Psalms, 36:1): "Our Lord Jesus Christ was sent to be our Master, yet he declared that even the Son of Man was ignorant of that day, because it was not part of his office as Master to acquaint us with it." Regarding the knowledge Christ had during his life on earth, see the note on Lk 2:52.

Gospel Reflection

At this time when we near the end of another liturgical year, the Lectionary includes gospels about the end times that call for us to look far into the future. These gospels inevitably paint a dark and dismal picture of calamity and doom, and so we often dismiss them. The apocalyptic (the word "apocalyptic" comes from the Greek which means to "uncover" or "reveal") imagery of this Sunday's gospel ("sun will be darkened," "moon will not give its light," "stars will be falling from the sky," and "powers in the heavens will be shaken") is no exception. We are tempted to ask, "When, Lord?" Jesus' answer, "no one knows," ought to bring us to pay more attention to the present. Now is an opportune time for the in-breaking of Christ. Now is what counts. The future is now.

We think of Jesus' Second Coming as a future event. In fact, the darkening of the sun and moon and stars is already happening in the trials and tribulations that not only beset the first disciples, but also are part of our own lives. Jesus promises that all these things will happen. He further promises that he is "near, at the gates." This gospel is about the ultimate victory over darkness that belongs to those who are faithful. That victory is now. The future is now.

What ought to startle us into sober reality is that we know the end will come. Like the gospel, Daniel's vision describes in the first reading "a time unsurpassed in distress." Also like the gospel, his vision reveals the victory of those "written in the book" who are the elect, those who have been faithful. We have all the means at hand to face darkness and evil with confidence, assured that one day we "shall live forever." The future holds no fear for us; rather than fear, we anticipate our future with joyful expectation, because the one we await is within and among us now. The future is now.

In previous gospel passages, Jesus' teaching about future events dealt with his impending suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus predicted several times the coming end of his earthly life, which was not too far into the future. The disciples could not hear what Jesus was teaching; they could not envision a future such as Jesus predicted. In this gospel, too, he teaches about the future; however, this time his words deal with an unknown, distant future, with cosmic events, which his final coming in power to

overcome darkness, and with his drawing the elect into the light of his final glory. Jesus uses the image of the greening of "the fig tree" when summer is near as a sign that "he is near." Summer is a time of life, growth, fruitfulness. Those who hear and heed his words are in the greening of their lives; they choose for themselves life, growth, fruitfulness. For them, the future is now.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Just as big calamities are not what the future is really about, neither are big deeds what our present is about. Our present is about doing the little things well, and we know how we "lead the many to justice" (first reading): by listening to Jesus' words. Jesus has already given us all we need to have our names "written in the book." We just need to live like he did: with compassion and understanding, wisdom and care, love and hope.

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Daniel 12:1-3

¹At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who mounts guard over your people. There is going to be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, your own people will be spared, all those whose names are found written in the Book. ²Of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace. ³The learned will shine as brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity.'

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 15:5, 8-11

R : Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.

O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup; it is you yourself who are my prize. I keep the Lord ever in my sight: since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad; even my body shall rest in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor let your beloved know decay.

You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence, at your right hand happiness for ever.

Second Reading — Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

¹¹All the priests stand at their duties every day, offering over and over again the same sacrifices which are quite incapable of taking sins away. ¹²He, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place forever, at the right hand of God, ¹³where he is now waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for him. ¹⁴By virtue of that one single offering, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying. When all sins have been forgiven, there can be no more sin offerings.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

474 – By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal. What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal.

673 – Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent, even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed".

Sharing and Discussion

1. As you reflect on verses 24-27 what feelings are generated; awe, fear, jubilation, wonder, doubt, etc.?
2. The darkness that Jesus' coming dispels in my life is I need the Light to shine on
3. What affect, do you think, knowing the exact time of Jesus' return would have on you?

Closing Prayer

All: God of hope and promise, you will bring all things to completion in the final victory of your Son at the end of time. Help us to turn darkness into hope and despair into promise, and one day enjoy eternal life with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Bible Sharing – Every Wednesday
Venue : Church of The Holy Cross (Room03-06)
Time : 8pm-9.30pm
All are welcome !

For more information contact:
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References:

The Navarre Bible – Commentaries;
Living Liturgy – Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press;
Emmaus Journey – www.emmausjourney.org