

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, Jesus said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down." They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?"

And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them. "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately."

Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

"But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."

REFLECTION 1:

APOCALYPSE NOW!

We are drawing now to the end of the liturgical year. We have come full circle from last year's Advent celebration of Jesus' first coming to an eager anticipation of his ultimate appearance. We have experienced the love and the life of Jesus in every aspect of his incarnate existence. We are faced with the reality that the cross is still a powerful part of our experience and that the full knowledge of the resurrection is yet to be ours.

For that reason today's readings place before us those sections of scripture that refer to the end times. The readings assure us that there will be a just culmination of all our efforts. No matter how powerful evil may seem at present, goodness will never be overcome by evil. This is the message of the cross that resides at the heart of our hopes. Christian end of time literature, or what is known as Christian apocalyptic literature, was not so much concerned with predicting the future as interpretation, lending perspective to help people to understand their struggles as part of the birth pangs of the 'end'. By their endurance and constancy in the Lord, the faithful could meet the end with confidence and not fear, joy and not dread. At the time of Luke's writing the Christian community of the 80s was already experiencing its share of the cross in the form of persecution from both Jewish and gentile sources.

Today's Gospel (Luke 21: 5-19) was occasioned by an admiring remark about the temple's beauty. Herod the Great's work at renovating the temple was still in progress during Jesus' earthly ministry and was only completed 30 years after the events of Good Friday in 63 AD. Seven years later it was utterly destroyed by the Roman army under Titus. This is how Josephus, the Jewish historian, described the temple: 'The exterior of the structure lacked nothing that could astound either mind or eye. For being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner upon it than it radiated so fiery a flash that people striving to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the rays of the sun'.

