

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD  
IN THE  
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY  
THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
November 17, 2024**

**SCRIPTURES:**

Daniel 12:1-3	Our names are in the Book of Life.
Hebrews 10:11-14,18	His enemies will be subdued.
Mark 13:24-32	He will return with power and glory.
Psalms 16:5, 8-10	They will live in light and joy.

**SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:**

**Daniel:**

This book is one of the earliest forms of religious literature called apocalyptic writing. The word means disclosure or revelation. Under divine inspiration, the author tries to communicate a message of hope to a community assailed by devastation. The book is prophetic in the sense that the author speaks for God. (Prophets are not people who foretell the future; they are persons who speak for God or speak up for God and God's ways when the rest of society fails to pay attention.) For the first time in the Bible, we hear a clear message about the rising of the dead back to life. That, indeed, is a consoling piece of revelation in times when God's faithful people were being slaughtered wantonly by their pagan oppressors. God promises to deliver his people from the destruction which they are now enduring.

**Hebrews:**

In a kind of climactic argument, the author of Hebrews claims that the sacrifice of Christ needs to be offered only one time because the priest, Jesus Christ, is an eternal priest, unlike the high priest of the Temple who is a mere mortal, having to offer the sacrifice day after day.

**Mark:**

Several New Testament authors include some passages of apocalyptic sayings in their books. Matthew, Mark and Luke use this form of religious writing when dealing with the words of Jesus about the end of the world. As these Gospels were being written, the Christian communities were undergoing severe persecutions. The future seemed dim indeed, even to the most ardent believer. There was a great need for a message of hope, a message that God would overcome the evil that assailed them now. Jewish Christians were familiar with this form of religious literature already. It was ready made for their edification and encouragement. Jesus himself may even have used these forms in his preaching to a people who looked for divine deliverance even in his day.

By the time Mark writes, the Temple in Jerusalem may already have been destroyed. Surely, the Jewish people, Christian and non-Christian, would have seen this as equivalent to the sun being darkened, the moon no longer giving light, and the stars falling from the sky. When will deliverance finally come? Surely, the Lord will return now to save his people, will he not?

In every age since Mark's Gospel, we have looked for the same signs. We are told that God is in charge. The Gospels, and indeed all the writings of the Christian Testament, stand as witness that God is in charge of the whole universe, that nothing escapes God's notice, that the loving power of God will grant final victory to the powers of good, that evil will be overcome.

If we look for the stars to fall physically from the sky, for the sun and the moon to be darkened literally, are we not avoiding the true meaning of what Jesus taught? When we look for physical signs, we fail to notice the great darkness of despair that afflicts the hearts of so many in this world. We fail to notice the absence of hope in the lives of men, women, and children everywhere. We avoid the spiritual reality, while focusing only on physical reality.

Jesus will return when all that we had hoped in within creation has failed us. Then, Jesus Christ, who is the sun and the moon of God's reality, will rise in our hearts with a new brightness that no evil can ever darken again.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. When do you think the "end of the world" will occur?
2. What kind of "end of the world" are you expecting?
3. Do you think it likely that God will destroy all the beauty and the power that has been created in the universe?
4. Why should we not be afraid of the "end?"
5. Are you sure that God loves you? How do you know?
6. Can you explain to a person who does not believe in the resurrection that all will be well for those who are disciples of Jesus, the Risen Lord?

## **PRAYER**

As you pray Psalm 16 together, focus on the Message of Hope for salvation, for resurrection from the dead, for deliverance from all your foes. Pray the Psalm now in the name of the whole believing community.

Keep me safe, O God;  
In you, I take refuge,  
I say to the Lord,  
you are my Lord,  
you are my only good.  
Worthless are all the false gods  
of the land.  
Accursed are all who delight  
in them.

They multiply their sorrows  
who court other gods.  
Blood libations to them I will  
not pour out,  
Nor will I take their names upon  
my lips.  
Lord, my allotted portion and  
my cup,  
you have made my destiny secure.

## **CATHOLIC DOCTRINE**

The forms of apocalyptic thinking most popular in the press and on television come to us not from the Catholic tradition but from some groups of evangelical and fundamentalist Protestantism. Predictions of the end of the world abound in every age. As we entered the third millennium of the Christian era, more extravagant claims were made by those who believe they have a unique key to the interpretation of the Scriptures.

The Church shapes its doctrine in reaction to exaggerations and falsifications of the biblical content concerning the faith. To safeguard the heritage of faith concerning the fulfillment of God's promises, the Church has rejected those interpretations that claim to know the day and the hour for the end of the world as we know it. A century ago, when some Protestants disputed among themselves as to whether Christ would come again before or after the "thousand years" of trial for God's people, the teaching authority of the Church condemned those theories that would assign one or the other solution to the question. The Church will experience tribulation. Christ will come. It is not for us to know the timing of any of those events.

Moreover, the Church rejects as false any attempt to make the Second Coming and the ensuing judgment a mere historical event with no reference to the fulfillment of God's purposes in the realm beyond the physical. It is not sufficient to say that history imposes its own judgment, that human culture succeeds or collapses of its own weight. Humans do not by themselves bring about the full realization of God's ultimate intentions. Humans do not have the power to establish God's kingdom by their own energies.

The Antichrist precisely consists in the glorification of the human to the level of the Messiah. When humans claim that kind of false messianism, which would grant divine powers to mere mortals, the ultimate error and deception is occurring. There is only One who has all power and authority to overcome evil; that One is God. His Messiah is Jesus Christ the Lord, the only one who is truly human and truly divine. Salvation can come from him alone.

See: The Catechism # 675-676-677

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