

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

There is so much to worry about today. And the constant barrage of bad news can even plunge us from worry to despair. For example, it might greatly disturb us how radical Islamic terrorists, like ISIS, continue to attack and slaughter Christians and others in the Middle East. Or, we are troubled by news of ongoing racial injustice occurring in our country or by various abuses perpetrated by people who are teachers and police. And then this past Friday, when we heard of the horrifying and shocking news of over 100 people being killed by coordinated terror attacks in Paris with the major hostage situation that unfolded. And all of this in just this past month?! Do you worry what this world is coming to? Do you wonder what terrors the future could hold? Do you fear that there will be a major global conflict on the horizon involving militant Islam? I wonder these same things myself sometimes. But the thing is, we just don't know.

And there are lots of things that we just don't know. Take, for example, the words Jesus states in today's Gospel about the day or the hour of the coming of the Son of Man. When will Jesus return at the end of time in His Second Coming? Will it be sooner...or later? Only the Father knows.

And while we don't know the exact time, we do know what will proceed this amazing event – the Gospel of Mark tells us today: “In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.” Sounds like powerful, even scary, stuff! And it can be.

In the 1200s, the great saint and theologian of the Church, Thomas Aquinas, reportedly was asked, “If you knew the end of the world was coming in 15 minutes what would you do?” And after thinking for not even a moment, he was said to have responded: “the same thing I am doing right now.” Now, if we could, we might want to ask him, “So you wouldn't pray a good act of contrition or run to tell your mom and dad that you love them?” But you see, from St. Thomas's perspective, he wouldn't have to – because he was already living that way, each and every day of his life. He was prepared for death and to meet his maker.

So yes, such End Times stuff about the end of the world could possibly scare us. All of this devastation and tragedy and horror should wake us up. This is what happens in a world devoid of the living and true God and lacking the peace that only Jesus Christ can bring. We must wake up and realize that we cannot have it both ways. We cannot have true peace by leaving Jesus, His Church, and faith and morals on the side. We cannot have peace with a side of Jesus. We cannot live as though faith is only optional. The world has been falling apart since the Fall of Adam and Eve. And that's why Jesus was sent as Savior – to save us sinful human beings from ourselves.

All that's going on in the world is a wake-up call. And we should take it as such if that's what we need. But at the same time, as Christians, we have every reason to hope. Hope is seeing future realities and living now as though they were fully present in the here and now.

My brothers and sisters on day Jesus will return in glory. One day we will meet Him face to face. And one day the final battle between good and evil will unfold on this planet – if we're not creeping ever closer to it right now. But, if we are on the side of Jesus, then we are on the side of the Victor. He is the one who has already defeated sin and death. He is the one that has already risen from the grave and ascended into heaven. He is the one whose Kingdom shall never fail. And because of what He has already done and one day will do, we have every confidence to hope **RIGHT NOW** that although hatred, terrorism, and malicious selfishness might claim the physical lives of many, our eternal souls are safe in the arms of Jesus.

But, do we live our lives on this earth as Children of the King, or as children of the world? Next week, we will celebrate the final week of the liturgical year – the Solemnity of Christ the King Sunday. It's a reminder for us that Jesus truly is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and that His Father's Kingdom will never end. His Kingdom is a kingdom of light, peace, and truth, and we are members of it. Let us take comfort today that He has already overcome the world. And by the virtue of hope, may we truly know the eternal safety of His everlasting embrace. God bless you.