

## **HOMILY for 33<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year B**

This Sunday's Gospel & First Reading talk about the End Time. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A pastor & a couple of deacons were standing by the side of road, pounding a sign into the ground that read: "THE END IS NEAR! TURN YOURSELF AROUND NOW – BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!"

A car raced past & the indignant driver yelled out, "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!" From the curve, they heard screeching tires & a big splash.

The pastor turned to a deacon & asked, "Do you think maybe we should have just written: 'BRIDGE OUT' on our sign?"

Anyway, this Sunday's First Reading & Gospel tell us about one of the very important topics that we often forget to focus on in our journey of faith, namely, Judgement Day. I think it is fitting for us to be reminded about this serious topic as we are near the end of another Liturgical & Calendar Year. Whether we want to hear about Judgment Day or not, it is part of our journey of faith. If we have the day of birth, we'll certainly have the day of death. As the favorite passage of the Book of Ecclesiastes puts it: "There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the Heaven. A time to be born, & a time to die." So, this weekend we are reminded that there will be an end to this world; & we will all have to face Judgment Day. We need to prepare for that day & live in a way that we will not regret or be ashamed of when we will be summoned before the Judge of the living & the dead. Instead, we will look forward to that day & hold high our heads for living up to our Lord's Commandments of love: Living God & our neighbors.

To help us prepare for Judgement Day, Jesus shares with us this information in this Sunday's Gospel, "During that period after trials of every sort, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not shed its light, stars will fall out of the skies, & the heavenly hosts will be shaken. Then, people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power & glory. He will dispatch his messengers & assemble his chosen from the four winds, from the farthest bounds of earth & sky." Jesus evidently wants to tell us that on Judgment Day the whole Creation will be changing. Then, the Judge of the living & the dead will appear in the clouds & send out His messengers to gather his chosen ones to bring home to His Kingdom. Meanwhile, Prophet Daniel adds to Jesus' vision of Judgement Day with the following message in this Sunday's First Reading, "At that time, there shall arise Michael, the great prince & guardian of the people; it shall be a time of unsurpassed in distress... Everyone who is found written in the Book [shall escape]. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror & disgrace. But, the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, & those who lead many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

In addition to Jesus' vision of Judgment Day, Prophet Daniel wants us to know that St. Michael the Archangel will show up on that day. If there is one statue that we have seen a lot in the cemeteries, it would be the Archangel Michael with a trumpet to awake the dead. In fact, today's First Reading helps create that famous figure in the cemeteries. But, it is not a fun & exciting time for all souls. We are reminded today that it is a time of unimaginable distress. If you have taken a Final Exam in school or at work, you would know that it is a stressful time, especially when you are not well prepared for it. So, if we had lived according to God's

Commandments, we will be rewarded with an eternal life & shine brightly like the stars or the spectacular splendor in Heaven. However, if we did not follow those Commandments, we will be condemned to an everlasting horror & disgrace in Hell. Indeed, that is what will be happening on Judgment Day.

We all have not seen anything close to the scenes described in this Sunday's Gospel & First Reading even though we have had several movies such as Terminator 2: Judgment Day, the Day After Tomorrow, Rapture, Armageddon, or Zodiac: Signs of the Apocalypse. Those movies show us a chaotic & hellish scene as everyone gets scared & tries to escape destruction & death on that day. This scary experience gives us a glimpse of how Judgment Day might look like. Besides those Apocalyptic movies, I think September 11<sup>th</sup> gives us another scene of that historical day. I do not know where you were that day, but I remember well listening to the radio on that infamous morning & was told that one of the twin towers in New York was hit by an airplane. The Parish Staff of St. Patrick's Church in Portland quickly turned on the Television as everyone watched closely the latest shocking new. While watching that awful scene of a burning tower with people jumping out of the building, I had a flashback to the scene of the fall of Saigon. I saw airplanes fall out of the sky & black smoke bellow up from the four corners of the earth. I witnessed streets littered with dead corpses & abandoned military equipment & weapons. I smelled burnt stuffs & the odor of death. The whole scene made my skin crawl & left me with a bad memory about the Viet Nam War & its aftermath. I thought that day was the end of the world. I was not prepared for it & did not know what might happen next. I certainly do not want to get caught unprepared like that again.

As you can see, Judgment Day is scary & uncertain. That is why Jesus reminded us with the following message in this Sunday's Gospel, "...As to the exact day or hour, no one knows it, neither the angels in Heaven nor even the Son, but only the Father." That is why it is ridiculous for us to hear how some ministers told their followers that the end of the world would happen on Y2K or in the year 2000. Of course, it did not happen as they had predicted. For Jesus told us that only God the Father would know the time & the date. So, the best thing for us to do is to get ourselves ready for our Final Exam by living according to God's Commandments: Loving God & our neighbors.

My dear brothers & sisters, the world tells us to be concerned only about things of this life. This weekend, Jesus wants to prepare us for what might be coming, particularly Judgment Day. I do not know about you, but I would rather be prepared for that day since I have been told that there would be a Final Exam. I do not want to be caught by surprise or unprepared for it. For that is the worst feeling we would have as we will have to face the Judge of the living & the dead. Moreover, we could not re-take this Final Exam. So, let's get our lives in order to prepare for it & look forward to receive the great rewards that our Lord has promised to His faithful ones on Judgment Day.