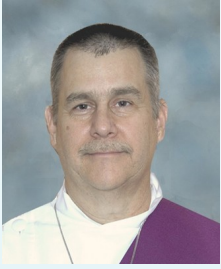


Homily Rerun November 13, 2016 ~ Deacon Bruce



We are nearing the end of the Liturgical year. Next Sunday, the Feast of Christ the King, is the last Sunday of the Church's New Year. The following Sunday, the First Sunday in Advent, starts the Church's new liturgical year. What better time to repent, to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, than at the end of the year? Make a fresh start with a clean slate at the beginning of the New Liturgical Year. Now is a great time to make resolutions for your spiritual life.

At the end of every Liturgical year, the Church gives us readings that deal with the end-times. These Scripture passages are given to us to remind us that Jesus will return, there will be a Final Judgment when He will administer true Justice and all will be sent to either Heaven or Hell. The readings usually sound pretty frightening, as it is in today's Gospel. But the images Jesus uses are not meant to frighten us. The purpose is to assure us that those who remain faithful to the end will participate in God's victory. They promote hope and trust in God especially in the midst of extremely disturbing conditions. Jesus is simply trying to tell us that this world with all its beauty and splendor will pass away. What the Gospel brings is not a message of threat or fear, but rather a message of hope.

The Second Coming of Christ, the Last Days, the Day of Judgment, is always upon us. Today (and every day) is a day of judgment for all of us in all that we do or say. It really isn't very threatening. It is more of an invitation. It is when our new life begins, that our understanding of our present life will be clear to us. We will be judged on how we carried out our role in the spread of God's kingdom.

To better understand what Malachi is saying in the First Reading, let's look at a few verses before today's passage. Malachi says this about those who remain faithful: **"They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my own special possession, on the day when I take action. And I will have compassion on them, as a man has compassion on his son who serves him."** (Malachi 3:17)

There is a saying, "Always live your life as though each day may be your last." I like to add, "Because one day you will be right!" Once we stand before God in judgment, we don't get any "do-over's." That is not to say that Our God is not the God of second chances. Our God **is** the God of second chances, third chances, millionth chances, but only as it pertains to our state of life right now, our life on Earth. We have to get it right **now**. We are called to live as if Christ was coming in the next second. But that isn't easy. The promise of Christ to us in today's Gospel that it is "by our perseverance we will secure our lives."

We need to persevere in living our lives as God wants us to, as we are called to live them as Catholic Christians. We need to call on the name of Christ for strength, rely on God's eternal spirit for strength and patience to endure. Live by the Gospel – which is eternal – and not by the things of this world. How do we persevere until the end of time, the end of **our** time? Because, you know, the end of the world for us is when we die to this life on earth.

We have the power of the grace of God with us always. All we have to do is ask for it and accept it. We have God present in the Church in the Sacraments to help us. We have the Sacrament of Reconciliation to help us start over when we've messed up. It is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that we get our "do-over's." What a wonderful gift from our creator!

We have Our Lord and Savior present with us and in us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This is to nourish us for our daily journey toward God. He gives us His very self to help us follow Him. One thing is certain - God's love for us. Jesus tells us that no matter what happens He will be with us.

Above all we need to maintain hope. Not hope, like "I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow," but the Christian virtue of hope. Fr. Bill defines the Christian virtue of hope as: "Looking forward to a future reality with such confidence that I rejoice as though I possess it today, because by/in faith I do possess it today."

Each of us should have a plan for our spiritual life that will lead us to everlasting life. Each of us should set aside a time for prayer and a time for study of our Catholic Faith. None of us knows everything about being Catholic. There is always more to learn. A study of Scripture and the Catechism will assist us in making our faith an integral part of our lives, rather than something we practice once in a while. We should take advantage of the opportunity of the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently. It is the gift of this Sacrament in which we get our chance to "do-over" those things we didn't get right the first time. The greatest aid we have to prepare for **our** end time is the Eucharist. We have Our Lord and Savior, body, blood, soul and divinity present with us and in us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. And so, I leave you with the words of Saint Paul, **"Brothers and sisters, do not grow weary of doing what is right."**