

The Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 13, 2016

Jesus gives us a rather terrifying prophesy in our Gospel reading for this next to last Sunday of the liturgical year. The Temple will be destroyed, nation will fight against nation, there will be earthquakes, plagues and famines, Democrats and Republicans will intermarry, and the disciples of Jesus everywhere will be severely persecuted.

All these things have already come to pass, some of them many times over. We also know that as the future unfolds there will be many more catastrophic events.

Of course we try to do what we can to avoid war and to avert tragedy but it's not easy because there are so many other forces at work. Even if it were possible to minimize the impact of humanity on the natural world there would still be earthquakes and hurricanes and other natural disasters just like we have recently seen in the Haiti and other places affected by Hurricane Matthew.

Although in the shadow of these natural and man-made evils we might feel that the end of the world can't be far away. We have no idea when the Last Day will come because Christ didn't tell us. But what he did tell us very clearly in today's gospel is not to listen to those who say the end is near.

All we have to do is simply live our lives as one of his true disciples and to face whatever happens with the courage of our faith.

Each generation and place brings its own challenges for the Christian. For some this will involve being persecuted, for others it will mean resisting apathy, bigotry or

economic marginalization. The important thing is that we remain faithful to Christ whatever the particular challenges might be.

This is what authentic discipleship is really all about; to live the same kind of life that Jesus lived. To model ourselves so closely on him that we begin instinctively to think about things the way he does. That our actions become the type of things he would do. This is what it is to be a disciple; this is what it is to be Christ-like.

The only problem with doing this is that we discover that the kind of things that happened to Jesus begin to happen to us.

Now that may sound fine if all we know about Jesus is that He liked to eat and drink with sinners.

The downside is that it also means that a fair number of people will dislike us; all kinds of obstacles will appear in our paths. And the shadow of the Cross will begin to appear in our lives.

Of course, the Cross is something that we all know about; we all realize that it's an essential part in the life of a Christian. We even begin to acknowledge that it is inevitable and necessary, that is until we begin to experience it. Then it seems like the shadow of death comes over us, and suddenly we realize just what the Cross really means.

It means never being afraid or reluctant to witness to the truth of Jesus Christ and his power to overcome sin, fear, hatred, violence, and prejudice, and even death itself.

What gives courage and confidence to us as disciples is the firm hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of eternal life and unending happiness with God.

The cross means that God may even call some of us to be martyrs for our faith.

But for most of us, our call is to be 'everyday' martyrs who are called to give testimony to the joy and power of the gospel in the midst of daily challenges, contradictions, temptations and hard times that come our way as we follow the Lord Jesus.

And our friends, co-workers, family, our children and even our adversaries will find themselves attracted to our faith in Jesus when they see us loving our enemies, being joyful in suffering, patient in hardship, forgiving all injuries, and showing comfort and compassion to the hopeless and the helpless.

They'll look at our lives, our reputations, the strength of our faith, the depth of our interest in justice. In fact they'll look at everything we say or do.

Today's readings have all been about the time that the world has left as well as what we are to do with the time that we have left. The Day of the Lord will come. We have an important role to play.

We're told by the Lord to give testimony to God and His way in our lives. Is it difficult? You bet!

Will those around us who love us, particularly our family and friends, question our actions? Probably. But, as the Gospel concluded, when we are questioned, we need to trust God to provide us with His answers.

And always, always, no matter what the situation, no matter how intense the injury we suffer, we need to stand for the Lord. That's the way of the Christian. Jesus is our Savior. He saves us from the hatred that would destroy us.

Today let's pray for the courage to persevere in our living faith and look forward to whatever the future might bring with the hope and courage that is ours as daughters and sons of God.