

33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time (C): You will secure your lives with perseverance!

Mal. 3:19-20a; Psalm 98:5-6,7-8,9; 2 Thess. 3:7-12; Luke 21:5-19

Greetings of Peace in the Lord!

In this Sunday's gospel, our Lord Jesus gives his words of warning and assurance to all who believe in him, "You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance, you will secure your lives" (Luke 21:17-19).

Towards the end of the liturgical year, before entering the Advent season, the Church leads our minds and hearts to contemplate the end of times and to look forward with hope to our Final Judgement. It is an opportunity the Church gives us to reflect on the following: What is the destiny of human life? What is the end, the goal, and how do we achieve it? What can we do to achieve the outcome that God wants us to achieve? What we hoped for?

The images of the destruction of the physical world and the conflict of powers and principalities in our liturgical readings are meant to awaken our faith. In particular, the pictures of end-times, like wars, earthquakes, plagues, famines, and insurrection (cf. Lk. 21:5-19), are apocalyptic images intended to uncover or reveal something beautiful and important instead of scaring us. They are to make us realize that the powers that govern our world, like untruthfulness, deception, the prevailing corrupt forces, and the destructive power of sin, will have their end. Prophet Malachi reflects on this by saying, "For the day is coming, blazing like an oven when all the proud and all the evildoers will be stubble" (Mal 3:19). When the judgment time comes, those ungodly people, those who live in lies and deception, greediness and corruption will come to an end. However, those who live in righteousness and depend so much on God will experience healing and redemption (cf. Mal 3:20). His message is an exhortation to look forward to God's healing and redeeming acts, to be vigilant against the corruption of worldly powers, and not to be deceived by the influences of untruthfulness and ephemeral comfort nor discouraged by the trials in life.

The admonition of St. Paul to the early followers of Jesus in the second reading echoes the tone of the words of Prophet Malachi. St. Paul admonishes the Christians of Thessalonica for their complacency, living disorderly, acting like busybodies, and being very nosy about the business of others. He urges them that they are to work and never weary of doing good for the Lord (2 Thess. 3:7-9). This advice is meant for us as well! We are invited to concentrate on doing good for the Lord rather than rambling around. Remember, Jesus is already victorious over the power of sin through his passion, death, and resurrection. This victory is offered to all his followers; indeed, we all have access to this incredible grace. All the Sacraments we celebrate in the Church are our encounters with the Risen Lord. They are the visible signs of the invisible grace of God that confer sanctifying grace in our lives, most especially the Holy Eucharist. Jesus never ceases to exist as Emmanuel among us. He, the Word made flesh and dwelt among us, continues to stay with us through the Holy Eucharist. It is the tangible presence of his promise, "I will be with you until the end of time" (Matt. 28:20), and the source of our constant renewal when accepted in faith.

Our Lord Jesus has gifted us with his perpetual presence!

With this confidence, let us nurture it by prayerfully listening to God's words, especially amid the challenges of our times. "When you say, 'it's impossible,' God says, "All things are possible" (Lk. 18:27). When you say, 'I am tired,' God says, 'I will give you rest' (Mt. 11:28). When you say, 'Nobody loves me,' God says, "I love you" (John 3:16). When you say, 'I can't do it,' God says, "I can do all things" (Phil. 4:13). When you say, 'I feel all alone,' God says, 'I will never leave nor forsake you.' (Heb. 13:5) When you say, 'I'm afraid,' God says, "I have not given you a spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Furthermore, let us practice daily self-examination. It is an ancient spiritual practice. It is like a safety check and could help us grow to persevere in faith: Choose the time of the day to experience a brief prayerful silence and do the following: 1. Become aware of God's presence. 2. Review the day with gratitude. 3. Pay attention to your emotions. 4. Choose one feature of the day or read a particular passage from the Bible and pray from it. 5. Look towards tomorrow, then conclude your prayer with Our Father and Hail Mary.

God bless you!

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