

33rd Sunday B homily:

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Sunday we are near the end of the liturgical year with next Sunday's Masses celebrating Christ the King. Advent follows!

For the month of November we have been listening to readings that point to the end times when Jesus will rule eternally overall and evil will be banished into the depths of hell forever.

This Sunday our readings point to the ultimate day of the final judgment with the second coming of Jesus.

For near two thousand years many have thought the end was at hand,

Such as when over two hundred years ago, the Connecticut House of Representatives had gathered on a bright sunny day.

The delegates discussed and argued by natural daylight.

But something happened that nobody expected. Right in the middle of a debate, an eclipse of the sun brought total darkness.

Panic took over. Some wanted to adjourn the meeting; others thought the world was at end and that the Lord was coming.

But the Speaker of the House had a different idea.

A Christian believer, he rose to the occasion with good logic and good faith.

"We are all upset by the darkness, and some of us are afraid. But the day of the Lord is either approaching or it is not.

If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. And if the Lord is returning, I, for one, choose to be found doing my duty.

I therefore ask that candles be brought forth."

Everyone, including the men who expected the return of Jesus, went back to their desks and resumed their debate.

The speaker was right.

Many Christian sects and denominations have prophesized the end is near or immanent, and much of their lives center on preparing for the second coming of Jesus, and ignore the present.

Many TV evangelists and denominations create excitement or even hysteria over their interpretation of the immanency of Jesus' return.

However, Jesus clearly tells us in today's Gospel reading that no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor himself, but only the Father in heaven.

He simply calls us to be ready for his return!

What must we do?

Not worry about it; it's out of our control.

What we should be concerned with are the four last things we all will face at the end of our lives: DEATH, JUDGMENT, HEAVEN AND HELL.

We cannot control Death for it is our common destiny, and we all will face Judgment on how we lived our lives.

We cannot escape that!

As in the reading from the book of Daniel we will have a choice:

to live forever with God in heaven or exist forever in everlasting horror and disgrace.

This is the judgment we choose by how we have lived our lives.

Will our names be written in the "Book of Life"?

We should live to be so.

As scripture tells us, our death marks the solidification of our acceptance or rejection of Jesus the Christ.

At death, our decision in life cannot be changed!

So our individual judgment comes immediately after our death as in Hebrews it says, "It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment."

Those who die, freely rejecting Jesus, will immediately find themselves in Hell, which is eternal separation from God.

Can you just imagine the pain and sorrow one would experience being outside the gates of heaven and know that you will never enter.....and that you chose this in life?

However, those who die with sanctifying grace will be judged worthy of entering heaven, through the merits of the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

There are many who are going to heaven through the forgiveness of their sins that may have to face temporal consequences for them.

They will need to be cleansed through purgatory before entering into heaven. This is a good thing; it means we are getting into Heaven!

Our purgation may take place here on earth for some who suffer greatly and others who may suffer after death and before they get into Heaven. We must pray for them!

In the Book of Revelations we are told that only the pure and clean of heart can enter.....

Who among us will die with a pure heart?

The Catholic Catechism explains this well. For further explanation look up in the index under Purgatory..... #1032-33

In several places in scripture and as we heard today, Jesus will return in in a second coming in great glory with his angels in a general judgment at the end of time.

It is here he will separate the faithful, both the living and dead, who will live eternally in Heaven, from those who will be cast eternally into hell along with Satan and his demons as described in Matthew 25:31-32.

What does it take to get into Heaven?

The following is a small gut-check to consider:

Did we honor the greatest of the commandments that we are to love God with our whole heart, our whole mind, our whole being?

Did we love our neighbor as ourselves?

Did we live by the Ten Commandments, the foundation of the moral law?

Have we asked for forgiveness and mercy when we have sinned?

Is the sacramental life of the Church a core part of our identity as a Christian?

Perhaps the best thing to do the rest of today to prepare for the Lord's coming or our leaving life is to simply do the next right thing.

"To see the Lord more clearly, love him more dearly; follow him more nearly---day by day.

Think of one thing that will demand a little more kindness, listening, sacrifice or openness.

Give it your best and let the light of Christ shine through you in all that you do!"

May we be about his work when our end, or Jesus comes in great glory!

Amen!

JMJ