

12th November 2021

Dear Parishioners,

For the last week in 'Ordinary Time' we have a Gospel about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of this world. This should be cheerful you're thinking.... Well, what's worse is that there's so much to say on the topic I'll probably start rambling....anyway...

In recent times archeologists believe they have found the site of the Middle Bronze Age city of Sodom. They discovered evidence of the large city being totally destroyed by intense heat, too intense to be man generated. In Genesis it says God rained down fire upon the city and destroyed it for its sins. In today's Gospel, 12th November, in Luke's Gospel chapter 17, Jesus relates the end of the world to being like the destruction of Sodom when "God rained down fire and brimstone from heaven." In Matthew chapter 10 and 11, Jesus also mentions Sodom and Gomorrah when warning Tyre and Sidon and also regarding those who do not welcome the teaching of the Apostles.

In Sunday's first reading from Daniel, he prophesies that St Michael, Prince of the hosts of heaven, will rise up. There will be distress unparalleled since the world began. Then there will be judgement with eternal consequences. Apparently what we can expect in the end times is not even paralleled with Sodom. Let that be a reminder to pray to St Michael in these times. Previously in chapter 10 the Son of Man tells Daniel that "In all this there is no one to lend me support except Michael your prince." The prophet Daniel today also says that God's people will be spared; "those whose names are found written in the book."

And Daniel speaks of the resurrection of the body too, saying, "of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake." In Sunday's psalm 15 (which St Peter and also Paul quote to argue for the resurrection of Christ at times in the Acts of the Apostles) it says, "even my body shall rest in safety; for you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor let your beloved know decay." We will receive a transfigured body at the end too. Our Lord says, "the hour is coming when all who are in the tomb will hear His voice and come forth..." (Jn 5:27) The ancient hymn the Dies Irae, traditionally sung at every funeral and Mass for the dead, speaks of this too (I've added an abbreviated translation below).

Something that we continually repeat and need to be reminded of is that only faithfulness to God can save us. Not health measures, not carbon neutrality, not laws and policies, not acting 'prudently' (nothing to do with the actual virtue of prudence- the 'queen of virtues'. For instance, Caiaphas acted 'prudently' when he said "it is better for one man to die for the nation than for the whole nation to perish" Jn 18:14), not weapons and armies, not political alliances, nor popularity with other people, not investment portfolios. I'm sure Sodom felt pretty secure some 4000 years ago. Even in the Church, which Christ gave personal assurances to, so many think the safety and survival of the Church herself relies on things like money, administrative structures, or political alliances and agreements with the state. Faith in God is our only hope. Anyone with faith, or versed in Aristotelian philosophy, knows that we are always 100% totally reliant on God holding us in existence at every moment- so our lives might as well reflect that fact by placing all our hope in being totally faithful to Him! ...I'm getting my ramble on....

In the Gospel Jesus says that after the time of distress "the sun will be darkened... the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." And he will "send the angels to gather" as He mentions time and time again regarding the final judgement. Elsewhere it says that in that moment there will also be a moment of enlightenment too

as “they will weep for the one whom they have pierced.” (Zacchariah 12:10; Revelation 1:7; Mt 24:30) I think that is particularly beautiful.

A couple of books on the end times you might like to read are ‘Lord of the World’ by Robert Hugh Benson, ‘Fr Elijah’ by Michael O’Brien, and the last book of C.S. Lewis’ Narnia series, ‘The Last Battle’- though it’s not as beautiful as the description of creation which is in the first Narnia book, ‘The Magician’s Nephew’ which should receive much more credit than it does.

The sun being darkened is mentioned many times in both the old and new testaments. It’s mentioned not only as prophecy, but was one of the plagues of Egypt and happened when Jesus was on the cross. Did you ever notice how the sun and moon both appear the exact same size in the sky to our eyes? This makes a lunar eclipse possible for instance. This is because the proportion of the diameter of the moon to its distance from the earth is the same proportion as the diameter of the Sun to its distance from the earth. The probability of that happening is ridiculous. Just pointing out another science fact that shows God made our world so insanely beautiful for us.

Ps If you’d like to know more mind blowing science facts check out “Is Atheism Dead” by Eric Metaxis. I don’t believe there’s a coincidence that modern science is discovering so many things that point to God in our time. When so many have thought to use science to disprove God, God is overwhelming us with His designs. Modern science is discovering the overwhelming complex ordering of nature, to such a minutely, fine-tuned, extent that the slightest changes would make life and existence impossible. I’m convinced that the reason why many actually see these scientific discoveries as evidence that God does not exist is that they simply cannot believe that God could love each of them to that mind-blowing extent. Why would He do that for me?! And it’s just too scary! They have a point of course, it is indeed too much for us to grasp- it gives us goosebumps- we don’t deserve it, and yet He does indeed love us that much.

I’ve said enough for this week.

God bless
Fr John Paul

Dies Irae

Day of wrath, that day
When all is reduced to ashes
As David and the Sybil prophesy.

What a tremor there shall be
When the Lord comes
Shattering every grave

A trumpet, resounding
Over the sepulchers of the world,
Bringing all before his throne.

Death is struck and nature quaking,
All creation is awaking,
Responding to its Lord.

Tremendous King of Majesty,
O Saviour, send for me,
and save me, O font of pity.

Remember, O sweet Jesus,
Who came down to earth for me,
Do not forget me.

You, now seated, wearied from seeking me,
You redeemed me, suffering on the cross,
Let not your labour be in vain.

Kneeling before you,
With humbled heart, in a pitiable state,
To you, my final rest, I pray, care for me.

O sweet Lord Jesus
Grant them eternal rest.
Amen.