

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday per Annum - B  
Daniel 12:1-3;  
Hebrews 10:11-14, 18;  
Mark 13:24-32  
Little Flower - 11/18/18

My Brothers and Sisters,

Each year, as the Church year draws to a close, the readings present us with a vision of the end times, the times leading up to the Second Coming of Christ.

The images at the beginning of today's Gospel describe a catastrophic end of the world: "*But in those days ... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.*" Today we know that the apocalyptic literary genre uses dramatic images that are not intended to be taken literally. The point of these images is to make sure we understand that when Christ returns, his coming will be dramatic. When Christ came 2000 years ago, many, if not most, people did not recognize him. When Christ returns in glory, all will recognize him.

If we focus on those initial verses, we miss the major message of today's Gospel—Jesus' coming in glory, the Parousia: "*And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather (his) elect from the four winds....*" The promise of Jesus' coming in glory is an invitation to hope. When I was in high school, a homilist reminded us that Jesus never comes to judge but only to save.

In the early Church, many believed that Jesus' return was imminent. We simply do not know and cannot know when Christ will return. As Jesus said in today's Gospel, "*But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*" However, just as we do not know when Christ will return in glory, we do not know when Christ will return for us.

This past week we celebrated three funerals: Marcella Bauman was 95; Jim Priller was 67; and Stacey Brown was 34. During his ministry, Jesus always reminded his listeners to be prepared for we do not know the day or the hour. A couple of weeks ago at daily Mass, St. Paul challenged us in a reading from his letter to the Philippians: "*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*" [2:12]. It seems to me that today we are overly focused on the here and now and do not concern ourselves enough with eternity. Therefore, we do not think about the possible eternal consequences of our choices and actions.

We need to interpret preparing for Christ's return as preparing for our own death. As I get older, I think of death more. Two Gospel verses always make me stop and think. One day Jesus asked, "*But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*" [Lk. 18:8]. The other challenges all of us who attend Mass regularly: "*And you will say, 'We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.' Then he will say to you, 'I do not know where (you) are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!'*" [Lk. 13:26-27].

My brothers and sisters, in today's Gospel, Jesus challenges us to read the signs of the times: "*In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates.*" I would suggest that Jesus is strongly encouraging us to be attentive to the signs of his presence in ourselves, others, the Church, and the world. The more we recognize Christ's presence within and among us already, the more hope we will have notwithstanding whatever is going on in our lives, our Church, our country. In last Thursday's Gospel, Jesus said, "*The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, 'Look, here it is,' or, 'There it is.' For behold, the kingdom of God is among you*" [Lk. 17:20b-21].