

**Homily for the Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time  
November 18, 2018**

If you're old enough, you might remember when people were claiming that Nostradamus predicted the world would end in 1999. Or how the Mayans supposedly predicted that the world was going to end on December 21, 2012 because that's all the higher their calendar went. I always get kind of a chuckle out of end time predictions. They're always wrong! But that doesn't keep people from trying. In the mid 80's a guy I worked with gave me a pamphlet that listed 88 reasons why the world would end in 1988. After the world didn't end, the author of the pamphlet revised his prediction to 1989. And then 1993, 1994, and finally 1997. And yet here we are.

I was curious as to how many times the end of the world has been predicted since I've been alive. According to Wikipedia, that number is 61. I'm 53 years old. You'd think after so many years of being wrong people would give up on predicting the end of the world, but nope – someone is predicting June 29<sup>th</sup> of next year as the new date for the end of the world. I wouldn't get too excited though. This guy also predicted that the world would end in 2011, 2012, and 2013. And apparently he has expressed "some doubts" about his June 29th prediction. Now there's a shocker...

In the Gospel Jesus tells us, "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father..." Not all those phony prognosticators, but only the Father, and he's not talking; at least about that. What God does disclose to us through Daniel - and what Jesus tells us - is what the end will be like.

In the first reading, Daniel describes the end of history as a time "unsurpassed in distress since nations began." Think about the events we've faced in the last century or so: wars, famine, floods, hurricanes, wild fires, tornadoes, terrorism, disease, economic depression – the list goes on and on. While that's all distressing stuff, every generation has had to deal with distressing things. Just look at the distressing things mentioned in the Bible: the great flood, plagues, wars, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, etcetera. But try to picture a level of distress

unsurpassed since nations began. It's almost impossible to imagine. In the Gospel Jesus makes the picture even more vivid: the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and stars will fall from the sky.

Daniel also warns that, while some will live forever, others will be "an everlasting horror and disgrace." Now this isn't a matter of luck, like some sort of heavenly drawing. "Uh oh, He didn't pick the Norwegians. Things are not looking good." The ones who will live in everlasting horror and disgrace will actually chose to spend eternity in hell by rejecting salvation and clinging to their sins.

The warnings of Daniel and Jesus might sound ominous, but there is also cause for hope. Daniel speaks of the resurrection of the dead, when "those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." Jesus talks about angels gathering his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky. Rather than a dark end, there is the glorious hope of eternal life! The Responsorial Psalm talks of 'fullness of joy in the Lord's presence forever.' God's will is for us to be in the joy of His presence forever, where there will be no wars, famine, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, terrorism, or any of those things that bring us distress, but only the purest of love. Doesn't that sound awesome?! From these rather grim sounding scripture passages, we have a real message of hope.

Have you ever wondered why the Church talks about the end times just as we're about to enter the Advent season? Doesn't it seem a little odd that in the span of just a couple months we go from the end of the world to "Joy to the World?"

First, it's a good time to talk about the end because we're nearing the end – of the Church year. In a couple weeks we begin the season of Advent, when we await the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ. In the gospel, Jesus says, "...when you see these things happening, know that He is near." There is anticipation at the end of the world, and there in anticipation at the end of the Church year into Advent. The Lord is near. His coming at Christmas is just around the corner.

Second, it's a great time to reflect on ourselves. If the world did end in the coming days, would we be gathered by the angels, or would we suffer everlasting horror and disgrace by rejecting salvation and clinging to our sins? The choice is ours.

Jesus told St. Faustina, "I do not want to punish aching mankind; I use punishment only when they themselves force Me to...My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners. Before I come as just judge, I first open wide the door of my mercy."

Know what the door of Christ's mercy looks like? It looks like the door to the confessional. In the confessional we receive an abundance of Christ's mercy when we acknowledge our sins and ask for His forgiveness. During Advent, the priests of our deanery provide several opportunities for confession at all of the area parishes. Walk through those doors of mercy during Advent, especially if you haven't been to confession in a while. And develop a regular habit of confession, so that you're prepared for His coming – at Christmas and at the real end of time...which probably won't be on June 29<sup>th</sup> of next year.