

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
Sunday 14th November 2021 - 33rd Sunday in ordinary time

Readings (Year B): 1st: Daniel 12:1-3. Psalm: 15. 2nd: Hebrews 10:11-14. 18. Gospel: Mark 13:24-32.

'The end is nigh' has been on placards for very many years. Always when I was in London there were men carrying them usually around the West End theatres, cinemas and the shops.

A time of pandemic, and the various events leading up to, and continuing climate changes: severe floods, raging fires, earthquakes, plagues of locusts, famines, not to mention wars that we don't hear much about but continue. In a way it was ever thus.

Each age has had its share of true believers who maintained that the world was doomed, ready to be destroyed by God, who was waiting for only a few moments before bringing down his fiery wrath on the heathen. All calculated by the doomsters to raise fears and perhaps at times panic. We've heard in the past of some sects, usually, but not exclusively in America, where they all commit suicide or are killed as a group.

A closer look at the readings today will reveal that their overall message is more likely to inspire quiet confidence rather than the negative spirit of fear. The ultimate message: **God will triumph in the end.**

Jesus, in the gospel, uses several images from the prophet Daniel, our **1st short reading**, to describe the final days. Daniel's vision of Michael, the Archangel, Israel's heavenly defender, raising up in a time of great distress, the souls of the faithful whose names are 'found written in the Book' of life. This is one of the few images of a 'resurrection' of the just found in the Jewish scriptures.

The Psalmist trusts that God will finally bring him to eternal joy in his presence.

The 2nd Hebrews reading, offers the surest possible grounds for confidence. It speaks of the glorious sacrifice offered by Jesus on the cross, and assures us that that 'one single sacrifice' achieves salvation for the whole human race.

The chief point for us is that, **Jesus who began God's work on earth, and continues it now in heaven, will complete it.** The early Christians expected Christ to return in their lifetimes. When their world began to collapse around them under the Roman onslaught on Jerusalem they wondered in their anguish: When will he return for us?

Like the members of the early Church, we live on the edge of eternity. With every experience of loss, with every sign of illness, with every hint of age creeping upon us, we become more and more aware of our mortality. Jesus neither denies the pain and anguish of the end, nor that the earth will pass away.

But the important thing is not when Jesus will come, which we can be quite clear about that no one, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, only God's knows.

What matters is our readiness to meet him.

The blossoming fig tree is held up by Jesus as a symbol of our lifelong struggle to bring to fulfilment the kingdom of God. The growth and blossoming of the fig tree mirrors our own growth in wisdom and understanding as God's reign becomes more and more a reality in our lives, leading us to celebrate next Sunday,

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Canon Philip Dyson