

33rd Sunday of the Year B

The Lord says: my plans for you are peace and not disaster; when you call to me, I will listen to you. (Jr 29:11.12)



First Reading

Daniel 12:1-3

"At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who mounts guard over your people. There is going to be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, your own people will be spared, all those whose names are found written in the Book. Of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace. The learned will shine as brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity."

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:11-14.18

All the priests stand at their duties every day, offering over and over again the same sacrifices which are quite incapable of taking sins away. Christ, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place for ever, at the right hand of God, where he is now waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for him. By virtue of that one single offering, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying. When all sins have been forgiven, there can be no more sin offerings.

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days, after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.

Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that he is near, at the very gates. I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father."

Meditation

Like their Jewish forebears, the first generation of Christians were heirs to a promise: the Lord will come. At first, they expected the promise to be kept within their lifetime. When the world began to collapse around them under the Roman onslaught on Jerusalem, they echoed the anguished questions asked by Daniel's people during a brutal persecution of the city generations before: When will he come? How will we know the time is at hand?

Our world, like theirs, seems threatened with ruin. Nations brandish nuclear weapons at nations; economies rise and fall; whole populations slowly starve before the watching eyes of the television cameras. Again we remember that we are heirs to the promise. Again we hear voices around us clamouring to know if it will be kept in our lifetime. When will he come? How will we know?

Hidden beneath this global anxiety may lie some awareness that for each of us the world is indeed passing away. With every experience of loss, with every sign of illness, with every hint of age, we are reminded that we personally are heirs to the promise. It will be kept in our lifetime. When will the Lord come for us in death? How will we know?

The ambiguous answer given to the first generation of Christians is given to us. We must seek the signs of the kingdom in our times and in our lives, but we must not become preoccupied with predictions of the day and the hour. It matters far less at what moment the Lord will come than how he will find us living the gospel on his arrival.