

## The Thirty Third Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle B 2021

Next week will be the last Sunday of the Church's liturgical year which ends with the Feast of Christ the King. As we come to the end of the liturgical year, we are reminded that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. We know not the day nor the hour and therefore we must be prepared to meet our maker at all times. Are you prepared? When last have you used the sacrament of Reconciliation? ( Monday Dec 20 )

The readings from the Book of Daniel and from the Gospel of Mark are classified as "Apocalyptic" which relates to the prophecies about the end of time. Apocalyptic literature is usually addressed to a suffering people and although it is meant to give hope, it contains a lot about death and destruction.

The Book of Daniel was composed in two different eras. Today's reading from the Book of Daniel was composed when the Jewish nation and religion was being persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. It predicted victory by God over the enemies of Israel with the help of Michael the Archangel. Judas Maccabeus defended the Jewish people and Antiochus died without eliminating the Jewish religion. God was and is faithful to his promise to protect and defend his loyal servants even when the enemy appears to be victorious.

Jesus' words brought great comfort to the community of Mark which was being severely persecuted by the Jewish and Roman leaders: days of tribulation, sun darkened, etc. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the

temple built by Herod in 70 CE, which ended the persecution of Christians by the Jewish authorities. However, the Roman emperor Nero, in 64 CE, had started the persecution of Christians which took the lives of Peter and Paul. This persecution lasted until 313 CE when Constantine became Emperor. The book of Revelation which is another example of apocalyptic literature, was written around 96 CE.

Although there is a lot of death and destruction in apocalyptic literature, there is hope because the victory of the just is always predicted based on our firm belief that God will win in the end. It was amazing that the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation were able to predict confidently victory for the just, **a long time before the end of the persecutions, and when the persecutors appeared to have the upper hand.**

Jesus' words in the Gospel today, remind us that the gates of hell will not prevail against his church. They do not say that it will not be attacked or suffer but that it will never be defeated. Upon his return in glory, Jesus with his angels will gather his elect: those who were faithful to his teachings, from the ends of the earth.

There is no doubt that our present world is chaos and a major war could erupt suddenly and unexpectedly. There appears to be so much evil in our midst. However we must never lose hope, Christ's victory on the cross guarantees, that in the end, the faithful will never be vanquished. Keep on proclaiming the Gospel, keep on living the Gospel. We can change the world!