

Homily. 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 17/18 November 2018.

I'll have been a Priest 34 years this coming February. That's longer than most people hold any position these days. It's also the time when many of my school mates are either retired or have retirement firmly in their sights. Over my long years of service there have been a number of constants wherever I go and I've become pretty good at reading them accurately.

One of these constants is that there are always a few people worried about the end times, focusing on these matters and putting their energy into them. Everywhere I've been I've had people come and assure me that their vision, or that of someone else, predicts the last days, some even down to the actual day and series of events. Others have set up prayer groups and the like asking God to spare them from the destruction they've come to believe is imminent. I've always strived to be kind, sensitive and understanding towards these people, seeking to listen to, guide and reassure them of our salvation by faith in the Risen Lord.

In truth though, I've little time myself for such worries and ruminations. Certainly, as the gospel says, a time will come when by one means or another all that we know will end. The how and the when, as Jesus told us, is unknown and largely beyond our influence. With this in mind I'm of the opinion that worrying, forecasting and fussing about the last days and end times doesn't help us one iota. Instead it's just wasting our best energy and clear headed focus from what we can actually do right now.

What we must hear and take to heart in these matters is that God's people will be spared the worst of the great change of eras and ages. As the Prophet Daniel wrote, those who have learned the way of the Lord and practiced virtue, instructing others in God's word, will shine out as bright stars for all eternity. This is the kind of star we should aim to be, not the like ones that get their couple of minutes of media fame then fade away into obscurity. Again, to quote the gospel, heaven and earth will pass away but Jesus words will not. Focusing on understanding our Lord's word, its meaning for our daily living, and putting it into practice with God's help; this is the best occupation for our time and talents.

Moreover, if we have faith in the victory of Jesus over the forces of evil, destruction and death, then ultimately we have little to fear when our time comes and when the final days, known only to God the Father, do arrive. By choosing the life-long development of our confidence, our faith in the power of Christ's sanctifying love and mercy which forgives all of our sins and failings, we discover the sort of hope which keeps us safe. Such hope becomes our daily bread placing us amongst the chosen who are to be gathered in by God's Angels from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Lastly, no matter what the gospel foreshadows, for us it's always what the gospel means, which is Good-News, the news of our salvation by and in Jesus Christ. Living and sharing the Good-News with others, practicing and developing a faithful outlook on life, will keep us in peace until all is made new by our loving and merciful Lord with us to the very end of time.