

Homily. 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 16/17 November 2019.

As this Liturgical year come almost to its close we are asked to focus on our own ending and on the last days. It helps to think of this as being like a rare once a year opportunity to remember what our lives are really about and where we're headed; a kind of stock taking and accounting to ourselves and to God for the direction and purpose of our daily living.

I know the saying goes that we're all individuals and that we've all got to think for and be responsible to ourselves; however this isn't the end of the matter. We're not, and we never were, individuals alone unto ourselves. Whatever else we might imagine we didn't make ourselves from nothing. God did that through the relationship of our parents and through the network of our family, friends and society who helped us to grow and formed us. Certain things were given to us from the beginning, from our genesis if you like, while other traits and characteristics came to be, and are still coming into existence as we make our way with through life. This is our reality which proves that from start to finish we're social beings dependent upon our interactions and relationships with the whole human community and this world. Everything we say and do, or neglect to do or say, has consequences for us, for others and for the future of this world.

Our faith tells us that there are 2 judgements, 2 accountings ahead of us; our own personal moment of truth when we die, and a communal accounting for us all when this world and its history finally ends.

The readings speak to both of these events with imagery that's powerful, scary and urgent. The words refer to a burning furnace and 'the day' when evil-doers will be wiped out. They speak to us of great buildings lying in ruins, of wars, famines, earthquakes and plagues, of fearful sights and great signs from heaven and even of people betraying and persecuting each other. They also tell us that those who have lived with respect for God and for others will be healed, enjoying the sunshine of God's light and that those who endure, witnessing to the truth, will be saved, winning their lives and seizing victory from the jaws of death.

Just as we haven't made ourselves unaided so we can't live for ourselves alone. This is the prophetic message behind all that the Word of God is saying. We've must be mindful of the impacts we make upon each other and the created world given into our care because our deliberate choices have real consequences, for good and for ill, far beyond ourselves and the short time scale of our lives. As the way we came into this world affected others, and as the we live now affects each other, so, too, the way we approach our death and passing-over has its communal effects. What we must understand, making it part of our thinking is that everything about us is inter-connected; nothing in us is purely our business alone. Without God and others we simply wouldn't be, nor could we continue to survive or thrive. Individuals we may be, but always as part of the human family and community where nothing is ever only about I and me, but always about you and us, be it our birth, our daily lives and even our dying breath. Keeping this fact firmly before us will mean a judgement, an accounting without fear, full of the rays of God's healing mercy.