

Homily. 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 16/17 November 2024.

In a very well known passage taken from Chapter 13 of Paul's First letter to the Corinthians he says that a time will come when all of our various gifts fail us with only three remaining; faith, hope and love and that the greatest of these is love.

Our Catholic tradition calls these three the Theological virtues because they couldn't exist in us without the action of God's grace and Spirit. They work together in a Christian persons life; Our faith in the message and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us hope; Hope brings us a gentle and steady joy in living which liberates us from our inward looking selfish preoccupation. This helps us to live and serve others kindly and generously in the image and example of Christ's service to all.

Now, as one Church year ends, the readings naturally come to draw our focus on what we call the last things; the end of our lives and of time itself. Thinking about these readings and those for next weekend which have a similar tone and reflecting on our times, it seems to me that we are witnessing a crisis or breach of faith. The many wars and seeming genocidal intentions, the deep shifts and changes in politics and civil society, the breakdown of international agreements and the ongoing economic harshness and turmoil we're experiencing are some factors that have birthed fear in many and we know that fear is the opposite of faith.

Joy has gone missing from the lives of a lot of people, with anger and resentment rising. Beneath these feelings lies a sense of sadness and grief over what was is dying and that what up is coming is scary and bad.

Hope is harder to find now, being replaced by gloom and depression. The upshot of this is that our sense of loving and common service is reduced, our attention being turned inwards as we try to nurture and defend what we have; our homes, jobs, family and friends, our own little back yard.

Into this reality we see Jesus facing his own awful ending and hear him telling us that fear won't win out, but faith will; that hope lives on and that love is stronger than even death itself. During our days of distress when all is shaken apart, he says that the clouds will part revealing him coming with great power and glory, adding that everything passes but his words will never pass away.

This is the bigger picture that we must embrace today; a vision painted wherein God knows what is happening, has our destiny in hand and will not betray us even if we betray God. This is the saving message for such times of turmoil and change as these, a gift inviting us to renew our faith in the Lord, our hope for the future and our generous loving towards all. It is this same eternal saving mercy, residing in grace at the heart of our faith and our Eucharist, that enables us even now to lift up our hearts and offer to the living Christ both our joyful thanks and our praise.