

Homily - Thirty-third Sunday of the Year (B)

Today is the Thirty-third Sunday of the Year. Next Sunday is the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year (B), the Solemnity of Christ the King. As the Second cycle of the Liturgical Year gradually comes to an end, our readings anticipate the events of the End, the four last things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

WILL THE WORLD EVER HAVE AN END? Common experiences show that everything is gradually moving to an end. You erect a building today, and it is very new and beautiful. In a few years, you can tell the level of depreciation. The house begins to cry out for repairs. You repair and repair until it can no longer be salvaged. It is the same with everything in this life; even of human life. This illustrates beyond any reasonable doubt that there is that ultimate end of all things. This world will end someday. Truly, "Heaven and earth will pass away..."

Heaven in this context means 'the sky and the planetary systems'. So the expression, 'heaven and earth' here implies the universe. It is not "heaven" as the state of God's abode. That one is an imperishable reality. It does not cease to be. Accordingly, when we pray 'the Glory' and we say, 'world without end' we do not mean this temporary world. We mean the 'imperishable order (God's own world, so to speak). This present world is perishable; it will end someday.

WHEN WILL THE END TAKE PLACE? Not as few speculations about the end have already taken place. Even today, some people have not learnt their lessons. They still revel in making useless predictions about the day the world will end. Jesus declares: "That day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." But wait a minute! How can Jesus say he does not know the day? Is he not God? Is God not omniscient – all-knowing? In this context, he speaks as a man, not as God. As man, he was born, was hungry, cried, died and was buried: "a man like us in all things except sin" (cf. Heb 4:15). But as God he knows all things, gives life, forgives sins, and is all powerful.

WHAT WILL BE THE SIGNS OF THE END? This is very frightening: Scriptures says, "It shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time". The Gospel passage ([Mk 13:24-32](#)) adds: "In those days after that tribulation [sufferings] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken". All these events prophesied as signs of the end

are present in the prophecies of many of the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah. We see it reflected in the same way in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation. In all the cases, there is no indication that these are metaphorical. The end is real. There is no twisting it around. Even the imagery Christ used connotes a literal fulfillment. His words indicate that it will be observable: "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates".

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE FINAL END, THE END OF ENDS? There will be Judgment Day. The Son of Man will come to judge the living and the dead: some shall be admitted into heaven and live forever, while others shall inherit hell – "an everlasting horror and disgrace". At Emmaus School of Evangelization, Issele-Uku, Nigeria, we usually perform a "Drama of a Foolish Man" titled: 'I don't believe in the Devil, I don't believe in hell, I don't believe in heaven'. But what a sad lesson when this man discovered too late that it is real irrespective of his erroneous belief during his earthly life. Let us be like the wise and maintain steadfast faith because: "... the wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament and those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever."

FINALLY, WHAT SHOULD WE DO? Since this world will end, what should we do in order to escape eternal annihilation? Is there any hope? Happily enough, the Word of God gives us the way out: unlike "Heaven and earth [that] will pass away ... my [God's] words will not pass away." The only escape then lies in clinging to the Word of God or to the words of God as proclaimed by Jesus Christ and his Church. Jesus Christ, OUR ONLY HOPE, is the Sacrifice that atones for our sins. He is the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass. "For by one offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated". So let us always confidently approach this Sacrifice – the Throne of Grace (cf. Heb 4:16) – for God has given it as a GUARANTEE OF SALVATION: "Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life and I will raise you up on the Last Day" (John 6:54). Let not this secular age lead us to eternal destruction: "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). A word is enough for the wise!