Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Mk* 13:24-32): Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days after that tribulation 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.

"And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

"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. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

"Know that he is near"

Fr. Pedro IGLESIAS Martínez
(Ripollet, Barcelona, Spain)

Today we recall how, at the beginning of the liturgical year, the Church prepared us for the first coming of Christ who brings us salvation. Two weeks from the end of the year, she prepares us for the second coming, the one in which the final and definitive word will be pronounced over each one of us.

In the face of today's Gospel, we can think “What a long term you are giving me,” but “He is near” (Mk 13:29). And yet, in our society, it is annoying -even incorrect- to allude to death. However, we cannot speak of resurrection without thinking that we must die. The end of the world comes for each of us on the day we die, when the time given to us to choose will end. The Gospel is always Good News, and the God of Christ is the God of Life: why this fear; perhaps because of our lack of hope?

Faced with the immediacy of this judgment, we must learn to become severe judges, not of others, but of ourselves. We must not fall into the trap of self-justification, relativism or “I don’t see it that way”... Jesus Christ gives us through the Church and, with Him, the means and resources so that this universal judgment is not the day of our condemnation, but a very interesting spectacle, in which, at last, the most hidden truths of the conflicts that have so tormented men will be made public.

The Church announces that we have a savior, Christ, the Lord. Less fear and more coherence in our actions with what we believe! St. J.H. Newman said ”When we come into God's presence, we shall be asked two things, whether we were in the Church, and whether we worked in the Church. Everything else is worthless.” The Church does not only teach us a way of dying, but a way of living in order to be resurrected. For what she preaches is not her message, but that of the One whose word is the source of life. Only from this hope will we face God's judgment with serenity.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “If you are asleep and your heart is not keeping watch, he will go away without knocking; but if your heart is alert for his coming, he knocks and asks for the door to be opened to him” (Saint Ambrose)

- “Everything passes away, the Lord reminds us, but the word of God does not change and before it each one of us is responsible for his or her own behavior. We are judged on this basis.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent, even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." (Acts 1:7). This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed".” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 673)