Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 21:5-19): While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings, Jesus said, "All that you see here— the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."

Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will this happen? And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" He answered, "See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.

"Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

"See that you not be deceived"

Fr. Joan MARQUÉS i Suriñach
(Vilamarí, Girona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel speaks to us about the final coming of the Son of Man. As the liturgical year draws to a close, the Church sets before us the mystery of the Parousia, and at the same time invites us to reflect on the "last things": death, judgment, hell, or heaven. The end of a journey determines how it is traveled. If you wish to go to hell, you can behave in a certain way consistent with the destination you have chosen. If you choose heaven, you must live coherently with the glory you hope to attain. Always freely. No one

goes to hell by force—nor to heaven either. God is just and gives each person what he has earned, no more and no less. He neither punishes nor rewards arbitrarily, moved by likes or dislikes. He respects our freedom. Yet we must keep in mind that once we leave this world, we will no longer have the freedom to choose. The tree will remain lying in the direction it has fallen.

“To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1033).

Can you imagine the grandeur of that scene? Men and women of every race and every age, with our resurrected bodies and our souls, will stand before Jesus Christ, who will preside over the event with great power and majesty. He will come to judge us in the presence of the whole world. If admission were not free, it would still be worth the price! Then the truth of all our actions—both interior and exterior—will be made known. Then we shall see to whom money, children, books, projects, and all other things truly belong: “All that you see here— the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down” (Lk 21:6). A day of joy and glory for some; a day of sadness and shame for others.

Whatever you would not want revealed publicly, you can erase now through a good confession. You cannot improvise such a solemn and decisive act. Jesus warns us: “See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name.” (Lk 21:8). Are you ready now?

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “But all faithfulness must pass the most exacting test: that of duration. Therefore the fourth dimension of faithfulness is constancy. It is easy to be consistent for a day or two. It is difficult and important to be consistent for one's whole life.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “‘By your endurance you will gain your lives’. There is so much hope in these words! They are a call to hope and patience. The Lord, the Lord of history, leads all to fulfillment. Despite the turmoil and disasters that upset the world, God’s design of goodness and mercy will be fulfilled! (Francis)

- “Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good. The virtuous man is happy to practice them.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 1810)