

Thursday of the Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 21:20-28): Jesus said to his disciples: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is at hand. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. Let those within the city escape from it, and let those in the countryside not enter the city, for these days are the time of punishment when all the Scriptures are fulfilled. Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days, for a terrible calamity will come upon the earth and a wrathful judgment upon this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken as captives to all the Gentiles; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.”

“Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.”

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Today, when reading Saint Luke’s Gospel, can we afford not to ponder over the present moments, fuller every day with threats and blood shedding? “On earth

nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Lk 21:25b-26a). The second coming of our Lord has quite often been depicted with the most terrifying images, as in this Gospel, and always under the sign of fear.

But is this really the message the Gospel is proclaiming today? Let us just look at the last sentence: “But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.” (Lk 21:28). The core of the message of these last days of our liturgical year is not fear but hopefulness of a future deliverance, that is, the Christian’s complete expectancy of the fulfillment of our full life with the Lord, which our body and the world around us will also share. The events narrated in such a dramatic way symbolically indicate the participation of the whole creation in the second coming of the Lord, as it already participated in during His first arrival, specifically at His Passion, when the sky darkened and the earth shook. The cosmic dimension will not be forsaken at the end of time, because it is the dimension accompanying man since he entered the Paradise.

The Christian prospect is not deceiving, because when this will all happen —the same Lord tells us— “They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Lk 21:27). Let's not live an anguished life because of the second coming of the Lord, because of His Parusia: let us rather ponder over the profound words of Saint Augustine that, already in his day, bearing witness of those Christians fearful of the Lord's coming, was wondering: “How can the Wife be afraid of her Spouse?”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Wait, wait, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Watch with care, for everything passes quickly." (Saint Teresa of Jesus)
- “The cosmic elements pass away; the word of Jesus is the true ‘firmament’ beneath which we can stand and remain.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Until everything is subject to him (I Cor 15:28), until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 671)