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.”

Fr. Lluc TORCAL Monk of Santa Maria de Poblet
(Santa Maria de Poblet, Tarragona, Spain)

Today as we read this holy Gospel, how can we fail to see a reflection of our present time, which is increasingly fraught with threats and stained with blood? "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" (Lk 21:25b-26a). The Second Coming of the Lord has often been depicted in the most terrifying ways possible, as seems to be the case in this Gospel, always under the shadow of fear.

However, is this truly the message the Gospel conveys to us today? Let us look closely at the final words: “When these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand" (Lk 21:28). The core message of these final days of the liturgical year is not fear, but rather the hope of a future liberation, a distinctly Christian hope of attaining the fullness of life with the Lord, in

which our bodies and the world around us will also participate. The events described so dramatically are meant to signify, in a symbolic way, the participation of all creation in the Lord’s Second Coming, just as it participated in His first coming, most notably during His Passion, when the sky grew dark and the earth trembled. The cosmic dimension will not be abandoned at the end of time, for it is a dimension that has accompanied mankind ever since it entered Paradise.

Christian hope is not deceptive, for when these things begin to happen—as the Lord Himself tells us—"then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Lk 21:27). Let us not live in fear of the Lord’s second coming, His Parousia: but rather reflect upon the profound words of Saint Augustine, who, observing that Christians in his own time were fearful of the Lord’s return, asked: "How can the Bride be afraid of her Bridegroom?"

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)

- “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, № 671)