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33rd Sunday Ordinary Time, Cycle C
Spps: Nezperce: Nov 14, 2010
Mal 3: 19-20a; 2Thes 3: 7-12; Lk 21: 5-19

Today's Gospel discourse talks about a consideration of *end times*. This is a discussion in the larger culture about what is termed: The Rapture. When I was serving at the Cathedral in Boise, many parents who had children in high school were very concerned that a number of their classmates were asking them if they were "rapture ready." i.e.---the end of the world is coming. This scared these high-schoolers.

One can come up with as many definitions of what being "rapture ready" is as people trying to define it. Oftentimes, however, those purporting an imminent rapture cite various signs, such as: economic decay, political decay, religious decay, the occult, amoral life-styles, breakdown of families, crime, violence, and chaos. [*this could all be on the 11 o'clock news...*] Some will go as far as reading current events to make predictions of specific dates that the world is going to end, or at least say that the end is very soon.

But here is the reality.
It is only **God** who has the answer to the question of the *end time*.

Christ not only talks about the *end times* in the Gospel today, but the discourse skips back and forth *between* the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, **and** the signs to appear before the *end times*.

Luke's Gospel was written between 80 and 90AD. The one Temple of Judaism, located in Jerusalem, was destroyed by the Romans in **70AD**. This Temple has never been rebuilt. There is currently one wall left, known as the "Wailing Wall."

Other than this one exterior wall—the Wailing Wall, what exists over the Temple site today is a mosque.

In the 1st century, Christians believed that the 2nd coming of Christ was imminent. What is interesting is that in this day and age, the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that "since the Ascension [of Christ into heaven] [His] coming in glory has been *imminent*." (ccc673).

This stretches our thinking, because we typically think of only the 1st century Christians believing that Christ would come back soon. But what the CCC is saying, is that after Christ's resurrection from the dead, and His ascension bodily into heaven, all of us have been living within the *end times*, so to speak. We are living *between* His first coming, and His second coming.

So again, Jesus in the Gospel talks about the stones of the Temple being thrown down, one stone upon another. And then He shifts, and talks about signs to happen before the *end times*; "there *will be* wars and insurrections," he says, "but it *will not* immediately be the end."

When the Catholic Church deals with the subject of the end times, she does not use the term Rapture, but rather, the term, Parousia. Parousia is a Greek word meaning "appearance and subsequent presence with." *The Early Church* used this word, as a specialized term for the glorious *appearance* of Jesus and His *subsequent presence* on earth. We use it today when referring to the second time He promised to appear to us.

As we consider all of this, it is important to remember that in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus says, "*But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,*"

but ***only the Father.***”

Remember the Ten Virgins
who were awaiting the bridegroom.
Five virgins had their lamps trimmed,
ready to greet the bridegroom when he came.
The other five were not prepared.
When we fold this into our consideration
of the Parousia---not knowing
exactly when it will occur,
the parable of the Ten Virgins
bids us to live in a ***state of preparedness.***

Dovetailing on this,
Jesus in the Gospel says something
very important in the last verse:
"*By your perseverance,
you will secure your lives.*"
To persevere is to live
in a state of ***readiness.***

If we persevere,
and live our lives
in a state of readiness to meet God,
we have nothing to fear from the **end time.**
This time of fulfillment,
and the glory it will bring,
is what we are really living FOR
within a genuine life of faith.

So, our lives in the kingdom of heaven start ***now,***
because we have been born
into a world already having received
its Savior for the first time---
God made flesh---
and we have entered that Savior's life through baptism—
the life of Christ,
and we persevere, in faith,
in joyful expectation of His coming again