

Missionary Commentary

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 17, 2024

Sunday Readings

Daniel 12:1-3
Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11
Hebrews 10:11-14, 18
Mark 13:24-32

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Solace in Seismic Times

“Calm down, don’t panic,” I often heard people in Chile cry out, when an occasionally strong earthquake would hit the country. “It’s not the end of the world.”

It wasn’t long after my arrival in Chile that I learned to sensibly stand under the doorway frames of a house or apartment, or get under a table, during such unexpected moments, and to resist the instinctive temptation to panic, and run out into the streets, where collapsing walls or falling electrical wires could easily harm me.

People of faith sometimes experience other kinds of earthquakes, as when governments or dictatorships persecute them for their religious beliefs, or a military takeover of government begins to kill and maim anyone who opposes or criticizes the regime, while we Christians remember to calmly begin to aid, protect and stand up for the victims.

Many missionaries in Chile, along with the local Church, learned to keep calm during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990), and to focus on helping the victims, whatever the cost to their own safety. There was no fussing over whether the victims belonged to our faith community or not, nor questioning of the backgrounds of those who showed up to help us look for and attend to them. We accepted help from all quarters, as we focused on helping all victims of violent injustice.

Jesus warns us, in today’s Gospel, to be vigilant, attentive and watchful for the signs of a future that comes from God, and not to panic. May the Holy Spirit allow us to have the clarity and hope to live our faith in the practice of solidarity with the oppressed victims of social, political or ecological catastrophes. It’s not the end of the world, but a new opportunity to experience freedom from fear, and the lifegiving nearness of the Kingdom of God.

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Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Daniel 12:1-3 — This magnificent poem concludes a long text of revelation (Daniel 10-12) given to this figure of Israel's distant past about the historical periods that the People of God experienced under several empires in succession—Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian and Greek. Experts call this kind of literature apocalyptic, revealing the future culmination of God's constant closeness to his people.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11— This song of trust celebrates God's care and protection over time, soothing believers both now and in the future.

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18 — Christ's single and unique sacrifice on the altar of the Cross helps the early Christians of Jewish background to deal with the end of sacrificial rituals that used to be offered in the Jerusalem Temple, before its destruction in 70 A.D. Thus they can grow into a new way of life, the author insists, reconciled to God through the one priestly action of Christ.

Gospel

Mark 13:24-32 — Jesus lifts our eyes, in today's Gospel reading, to contemplate in faith the end of time, when the fullness of God's Kingdom arrives, and we will become one with our Creator, in Christ. He warns us to be vigilant, not frightened, since "that day or hour" remains unknown, and will cause no fear to those followers of his who remain focused on the opportunities of the present time to live their mission of announcing and living out the Good News of the Kingdom, rather than obsess themselves with anxious attempts to predict its arrival.

*Notes and commentary by Fr. Bob Mosher,
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