

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 14-15, 2020

W5

As the liturgical year comes toward its end, we hear Scripture readings that speak about the End of Time. Such is today's Second Reading, where Saint Paul tells the Thessalonians: "*For you yourselves know very well that **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night.*" The "Day of the Lord" that Paul refers to is the Second Coming of Christ.

At the end of time Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead, and transform creation into a new heaven and a new earth. So, what are we to do as Christians in the period of time given to us before this happens?

Well, I am glad you asked! Saint Paul gives us some good advice in chapter five of 1 Thessalonians as to what we should be doing. Unfortunately, our reading cuts off at verse 6. I will go as far as verse 11.

Saint Paul gives us five things to do while preparing for the Day of the Lord.

1. Wait (1 Thess. 5:1-2)

"Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know

very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–2, HCSB)

Saint Paul is saying we already know that the Lord will return at an unexpected hour. It is not like He has abandoned us. Even though a great deal of time may pass since Christ ascended to His Father, yet we know He will return and so we live our lives expectantly in the light of that reality.

2. Watch (5:3-7)

“When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day.... So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.”

Saint Paul tells us that the days in which we live are not to be judged simply by external appearances – by the standards of those who are in the dark about God and His plans. Rather we should see the times as like the days of a woman’s pregnancy. Even though she cannot see her child, she knows that the child is growing inside of her and so she is preparing herself for the day of its sudden birth.

We know that God is hidden from the world yet active in it; that He is working out His designs. We must never forget it; we must never

become so complacent as to lose sight of this greater reality. We must “keep awake and be sober;” in other words remain vigilant.

3. Work (5:8)

“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”

We are not passively waiting and watching for the Lord’s return. We have work to do! Like a soldier who begins the day by putting on armour to protect him as he goes about his tasks. Our protective armour are the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (love). In the Bible faith is not just a matter of intellectual belief, it is also a matter of active obedience to God’s will.

We are like the servants in the Gospel parable who have been entrusted with their master’s property, knowing that one day he will return, and so in the meantime we do the work with which we have been entrusted.

4. Witness (5:9-10)

“For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.”

While we are waiting, watching, and working, we are also witnessing to others. Saint Paul tells us in 1 Timothy that God “*desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim. 2:4). God

created humanity not for wrath but for salvation. God sent His Son into the world to die for our sins and rise to give us new life. We too must die to sin and embrace our new life in Christ. But people will only come to a knowledge of this saving truth if we witness it to them.

The “talents” the master gave to his slaves in the parable were meant to be used, to be multiplied. The faith God has given to us is meant not just for ourselves but to be used, to be multiplied. As each slave is given a different number of talents, so we must find a way of witnessing that fits our particular temperament and abilities. We need to be creative!

5. Worship (5:11)

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.” (5:11)

Our faith is not a solitary thing. We did not give it to ourselves, it is not meant to be lived alone. Through Baptism we have become part of a community of faith, the Church, and the family of God. As such we are called to encourage and build each other up in the Faith.

We are encouraged when we gather together. For it makes us aware that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, that we are not alone in our Faith, and that we are with fellow pilgrims on this journey to “the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God” (Heb. 12:22).

And probably the most important way in which we gather together is in worship. At Mass we come together as members of Christ's Body, the Church. We pray together with Christ the High Priest to His Father. We listen and are formed together by the same passages of the written Word of God being proclaimed. We receive together the same Word of God made flesh in the Eucharist.

So, while we wait, watch, work, and witness, we also worship, as we prepare for the Day of the Lord. Amen.