

33rd SUNDAY Year B Nov. 18, 2018 given at the Cathedral of St. Matthew (edited).

Wednesday this past week there were solemn Masses here for the dedication of this beautiful Cathedral of St. Matthew. The psalmist cries out, “I rejoiced when I heard them say, ‘Let us go to God’s house’, and now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.” Can you imagine something happening to this building such as Jesus said to his disciples would happen to the temple in Jerusalem? “Do you see this building? he said. I assure you not one stone will be left on another—it will all be torn down.” (Mt. 24:2) The disciples could not help but ask when it was going to happen.

Jesus was foretelling the coming destruction of the temple when the Romans put down the Jewish revolt in 70 AD. Earthquakes, firestorms or bombings could do the same anywhere, any time. Nothing material is permanent here as we know too well from the lost lives and property from the fires in California. Though each day has enough troubles of its own, here at the end of the liturgical year the scriptures remind us great tribulations will come with the last days.

The warnings from the prophets and Jesus are somber and scary: “a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began,” says Daniel. Jesus prophesied that “Nations will rise against nations. . . . There will be famine and pestilence and earthquakes in many places. False prophets will rise in great numbers to mislead many. Because of the increase of evil, the love of most will grow cold.” (Mt. 24ff)

Right now in our time we are confronted with environmental extremes: droughts, fires, floods, tsunamis, and rising seas. There is an increase in hate crimes, gun violence, and the undoing of multi-national efforts at cooperation and world peace by isolationist movements. How long, Lord, how long will this go on? As we are told, no one knows the day or the hour when Jesus will come in glory and power to set things right; no one, only the Father.

In the letter to the Hebrews we read, “now Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, waiting until his enemies are made his footstool.” (Heb. 10: 12-13). Elsewhere the author says, “in putting all things under his feet, . . . God left nothing unsubjected. At present we do not see all things thus subject, but we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death” for the sake of us all. (Heb 2: 8ff). By the Son of God taking on our human nature along with its suffering and mortality, and then rising to glory, he has earned the right to claim his kingship over the creation he made with the Father at the beginning of time.

Some may ask, What is the enthroned Jesus waiting for? Was his victory over death and his breaking down the gates of hell not enough to cower Satan for good? St. Paul says that God is waiting until the preaching of the gospel invites all the gentiles and all the Jews to unity and fellowship under Christ’s lordship. The disciples have gone out to the whole world to tell the good news and live in ways that exhibits it. But Satan, as long as he has slack, will continue to fight against those proclaimers and their hearers.

Lucifer thinks he can thwart God’s plan seducing us by distraction, indifference, disbelief and outright rebellion. Praise God we have the weapons to outwit all his tactics. Paul lists them for the Ephesians and for us, “Stand fast, with the truth as the belt around your waist, justice as your breastplate, and zeal to propagate the gospel of peace as your footgear. . . . hold faith up before you as your shield; it will help you extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one. Take up . . . the sword of the spirit, the word of God.” (Eph 6: 14ff) Truth: there is only one truth. “I am the

way, the truth, and the life,” said Jesus. Justice generates peace and order. Zeal spreads the good news, and all the weapons we use should be motivated by Christ-like love of God and neighbor.

You and I know the battle begins within us. We have to drive out the spirits that stir up jealousy, greed, hate, doubt, mistrust, and pride that lead to thoughts and action contrary to God’s guidelines for a good life. When we make progress in that inward struggle, we are able to fight the battle that St. Paul says “is not against human forces but against the principalities and powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, the evil spirits in regions above.” (Eph. 6: 12)

We can call on the Holy Spirit to help us discern and cast down those other spirits working our eternal blessedness with God. We have St. Michael and our guardian angels, the intercession of Mary and of all the saints to aid us. Above all we have Jesus, who is faithful to his promise to be with us always. Especially so when we turn now to the altar to offer to the Father the gift of his Beloved Son, whom he sent to be our Savior. By his self-offering once and for all, Jesus has set us free from fear of death and failing in faith when severe trials are bound to come. To him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honor, praise, thanksgiving, and joyful obedience now and forever. A M E N