

20-5-2021

33rd Ordinary Sunday - 14 November 2021

Joe Tedesco

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Recommended Citation

Tedesco, Joe. "33rd Ordinary Sunday - 14 November 2021." *Pastoral Liturgy* 51, no. 3 (2021): 1-5. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol51/iss3/32>

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14 November 2021

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

The liturgical year is coming to a close. This penultimate Sunday of Ordinary Time asks us to consider 'final things' in a cosmological sense. All things come to an end, only the word of God is lasting.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you call your chosen from the ends of the earth. Lord, have mercy.
You are our hope for salvation. Christ, have mercy.
You will come again. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Daniel 12:1–3

Those who sleep in the dust, whose existence seems lost, will find eternal life. The wisdom of God is a marker of those who will shine like stars in the night.

Second Reading

Hebrews 10:11–14,18

In the Hebraic tradition, sacrifices were offered to atone for sins and allow people to be reconciled with God. In Christ we have one who has offered a single eternal sacrifice. Through this one offering, we have the assurance of God's ongoing presence through all time.

Gospel Reading

Mark 13:24–32

We who are called to Christ are afforded an opportunity to see beyond this world that will come to an end, to hear and experience a word that will never pass away.

Reflection

Faith in God always takes us to the edge of human capacity, that is its very nature. It calls us to stretch beyond ourselves, to the transcendent, to the fullness that is always beyond our knowing. This is so even at the best of times. But how do we maintain faith when we experience genuine hardship, oppression, disaster and suffering; times when our world seems to be in complete chaos? It is into this experience of a world in flux and chaos that today's readings most directly speak.

Biblical scholars often call chapter thirteen of Mark a 'little apocalypse', not because it is little in scope but, rather, because it presents as a short form of a genre most notably typified in the Book of Revelation. We see another example of this apocalyptic genre in today's liturgy from the Book of Daniel. Apocalyptic writings as found in scripture share many elements, one of them include that they are eschatological in focus. In plainer language that means they bring into view the end of times, where existence (and us along with it) is going to ultimately end up. Because it is speaking so directly of times outside of our vision and understanding, it is typically very poetic and symbolic in language.

Another feature that biblical apocalyptic writing shares is that it often reflects a context or audience that are experiencing great trouble, instability or oppression. We know that the Book of Daniel was compiled in such a setting. Some 160 years before Jesus' time, the Jews were experiencing persecution at the hands of Seleucid rulers who were enforcing violent oppression of the Jewish population and of their faith. Thus we see Daniel talking of "unsurpassed distress" coupled with the promise of "everlasting life" (12:2) for those who endure and stay true to the faith. Likewise, scholars generally concur that the Gospel of Mark was formed in the context of a Christian community that was facing stiff persecution at the hands of Roman authorities. Into such situations the readings attempt to speak a word of hope and promise, to draw people to faith even though life is so patently difficult. It is into this world experienced as chaotic and unstable that the readings speak.

Thus, the poetic language of today's Gospel expresses this 'world coming to an end' poignantly. The sun darkens, the moon does not give its light, stars fall out of the sky and the very fabric of the universe loses stability. This presents something of an undoing of creation itself. Though conceived of as a cosmological event, it also captures the experience of extreme hardship generally speaking.

When we lose a loved one, when we experience failure, when we significantly hurt the ones we love or ourselves are hurt by those around us; these extreme times of sadness can indeed feel like the world is collapsing in on itself and coming to an end. Those sources of light expressed in the Gospel reading – sun, moon and stars, are aptly chosen because they represent well what is lost when we face such extreme difficulty and sorrow. Those features provide light which allows us to see. In times of misery, we commonly use expressions such as 'great shadows hanging over us', being 'stuck in a pit', or being 'blindsided' because they describe the blinding effect that tribulation can have. We cannot see beyond the pain and difficulty, we lose sight of where we have come from and where we are going.

Here then we are talking not so much about troubling but still relatively 'lighter' moments when things don't go so well. We might have times when we might be

saddened but still have a sense of joy, when we are able to see because we still have something of the metaphorical sun shining or the stars to guide us home. But what of those times when it is completely dark; when those tenets of our faith seem failing and there appears nothing to guide us anymore, when even the pale moonlight of joy has disappeared, when the bright sun of the love of God seems not so much over the horizon, but has ceased to be a source of light at all?

Jesus does not offer us a guarantee of escape from such suffering, in fact, Jesus suggests that it comes with following him. Jesus knows well and communicates to his followers that trouble comes with holding to the will of God. He says as much earlier in the same chapter from which our gospel reading comes, warning that believers will be beaten and arraigned before many “because of me” (13:9b).

However, what Jesus does offer is hope and vision where there is none and a promise that all things do pass. Perhaps the knowledge that all things pass is the one thing we know even better when we experience trouble. However, Jesus’ word, the saving Word of God, never passes – and this word is spoken to us and holds us all in existence. It is a voice into the dark telling us that there is light on the other side even though we cannot see it. It is a voice into emptiness telling us there is substance even when our feet have no footing. It is a voice of eternal love even when we feel lonely and abandoned. This word transcends time and space. It is ever present even when the world we seem to know is falling apart.



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The Lord is eager to bring us towards eternal life through the love that we share here on earth. Let us be united in prayer and full of confidence that our needs will be heard.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church that they will truly witness in the world to the hope of the future coming of Christ.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the Catholic faithful, that they may live out the priesthood that was received at baptism and bring Christ's reconciling work to others.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who govern our country and those who live in this part of the world, that the current generation may work towards a peaceful future by dealing justly and actively with the effects of the pandemic and climate change.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the poor in all parts of the world as Pope Francis has called us to do. May those who lead the distribution of the world's resources, including the COVID-19 vaccine, become more aware of the need to be just and fair in sharing the goods that are available. May those of us gathered here respond with generosity whenever there is an opportunity to help the poor.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for people of other faiths and religions, that they may respect the liberties of every individual and be free to practice their beliefs in peace and cooperation with secular powers.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering from the effects of the pandemic and those still trying to get home. May they be sustained in their struggles by the love of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our local parish community, that we may be ever watchful for the Lord's coming and be prepared in heart and soul to meet the Lord in the everyday encounters with those around us.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Lord, you govern the universe with the power of your love. Listen to our prayer made in the name of your Son and grant it according to the power of your Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 444
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 446
For all the saints. W. H. How; R. V. Williams. 551
I am the bread of life S. Toolan RSM. 204
Love divine, all loves excelling. C. Wesley. 463
O Christ the great foundation. S. Stone/ S. Wesley. 483
Shelter me, O God. B. Hurd. 230
Sing a new song. D. Schutte. 414
Though the mountains may fall. D. Schutte. 453
Wait for the Lord. J. Berthier. 283

AOV1

Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 146
How great thou art. S. Kine. 94
I am the bread of Life. S. Toolan RSM. 49
Shelter me, O God. B. Hurd. 140
Sing a new song. D. Schutte. 80
Though the mountains may fall. D. Schutte. 182

AOV2

Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 170
I know that my redeemer Lives. S. Soper. 34

AOV4Kids

For the journey. G. Holmes. 128

CWB

For all the saints. William Walsham Howe. 679
The coming of our Lord. Charles Coffin, et al. 816

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Sing with all the saints in glory. William J. Irons. 147
Draw near and take. Trans J. M. Neale. 482
Love divine, all loves excelling. Charles Wesley. 552
Sing of the Lord's goodness. Ernest Sands. 601
Additional selection by Chris deSilva
For all the saints. William Walsham Howe. 439

S&S1

Keep me safe, O God. Jesse Manibusan. 53
Path of life. Trevor Thomson. 54

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 15: *Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.*
Psalm 15: Douglas Mews. CWB 269
Psalm 16 (15): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 106
You are my inheritance: Tony Alonso. LPB pg. 175