

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time: What We Really Need To Fear

Two and a half weeks ago we had that fun day of Halloween where the children got to dress up and go trick or treating, or, perhaps, trunk or treating. I'm sure that some adults also dressed up and attended Halloween parties. That was also part of the fun. Another fun aspect of Halloween is the scary stuff. Every Halloween there are scare houses and plenty of scarring movies. I myself am not into scaring other people, or being scared, but on Halloween it is all fun, I guess.

Today's readings are scary, but they are not fun. The first reading from *Daniel* speaks about a time of unsurpassed in distress. Jesus in the Gospel reading speaks in apocalyptic terms of a time of great tribulation, a time when the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall out of the skies. He speaks about a time so terrible that people will say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us over." This is not make believe. This is not just figurative language. Jesus is speaking about a time when we should be frightened. He tells us that the world will come to an end, and that we need to be ready.

We need to be ready. We need to have faith in God. He can get us through the horrible times. We need to trust in God. He will conquer our fears.

When was the last time you were afraid? Was it during the worst part of the COVID epidemic, when there were no vaccines and people were dying within weeks of becoming sick? What did we do with this fear? Did COVID awaken in us the need that we have to fear God and Him alone? It should have.

One of the saddest truisms of the *Book of Revelations* is that when people experience the horrible plagues of the end of time, many of them still refused to believe in God and trust in God. So we read, for example in *Revelations 9:20-21*:

The rest of the human race, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, to give up the worship of demons and idols made from gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic potions, their unchastity, or their robberies.*

The fear of dying, be it from an epidemic or from any cause, seen or unforeseen, is not the real fear we need to have. The real fear we need to have is the fear of denying God when we make the final decision of our lives. The martyrs, ancient and modern, all feared denying God more than they feared what their tormentors would do to them. When during the horrible century and a half in England when priests and lay people were dragged on poles to the gallows where they would be tortured to death, hung, drawn and quartered, they were certainly all frightened at the terrible things that were about to happen to them, but more than this, they feared that they would give in and deny their faith.

In *Phillipians 2:12* St. Paul says that we need to work out our faith in fear and trembling. Our fear is not in what others can do to us Our fear is what we can do to ourselves if we are not willing to live and die for the Lord. If we do not have a living faith, we have nothing but fear.

This is not a scary movie. This is the reality of existence. If we do not confess the Lord with our lives, we will condemn ourselves to being victims of our fear.

We are besieged with movies about the end of the world. They all follow the same format: people are selfish. Their selfishness leads to the destruction of the world. But a few people survive the apocalyptic events. Most of these people are also evil, but there are some good ones who fight the evil ones and live on to start a new future. Nowhere in these movies is God called upon to defend His people. Nowhere is there even a remote suggestion of building a God-fearing world. These movies are the creations of a godless media, a media who refuses to acknowledge mankind's dependence on his Creator.

We need to fight evil. We need to do battle for the Lord. "Michael, the great prince and guardian of the people will fight for us and with us," the *Book of Daniel* says. "The Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven and gather his elect from the four winds," Jesus adds in today's gospel. We do not fight alone. We fight for the Lord and with the Lord.

If we want to know what really will happen at the end of time, we need to reread the *Book of Revelations*, the *Apocalypse*. In the *Book of Revelations*, God wins the battle for our world. We need to realize that God is in control of the universe. He will also be in control of our lives--if we just allow Him into our lives. We do not fight alone. Whether it be against sin in the world or that sin that has a grip on us, maybe alcohol, maybe drugs, maybe porn, maybe our temper, maybe a roving eye that points us to infidelity, or perhaps our attitude that we are so much better than this person or that person, we do not have to fight sin alone. We fight with Michael, the archangel and prince, and we fight with the Lord who knows what is hidden in our lives, who knows what battles we need to wage more than we know ourselves.

And we go to confession.

In the sacrament of penance, the Lord not only forgives our sins, He joins us in the battle against sin. Perhaps, we take this sacrament too personally. We go to confession not only for ourselves, but also as our participation in the Lord's battle against evil.

At the end of the Church year, the readings present the end of time. The problem is that we do not take these readings seriously. We think that they are about some time in the far future. But we forget that there is no time with God. In *2 Peter 3:8* we read: "But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. " We are engaged in the Battle for the Lord

right here, right now. The early Church saw every Mass as another battle in the war against Satan. We are fighting this battle at this Mass.

May we continue to battle against evil with our lives.

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protector against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou o prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls.