

TRINITY 24/ORD 33 – 2021

Daniel 12:1-3

Heb 10:11-14;18

Mk13:24-32

There has always been speculation about how the world will end. TS Eliot wrote that, "This is the way the world ends, Not with a bang but a whimper."

The Book of Daniel and the Gospels take another view. The Book of Daniel was written in a period that some thought heralded the end times. It is a book of encouragement to those faithful Jews who were holding firm to their faith during their vicious persecution at the hands of the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes IV who reigned from 175 to 168 BC. His intention was to force Jews to abandon their faith and embrace the Greek pagan culture. Those who refused were slaughtered. This persecution was resisted by brave loyal Jews led by courageous men including Judas Maccabeus.

Daniel describes the faithful Jews as God's Righteous and the author assures them that the destruction of Antiochus, who represented all those who opposed God's Rule, would result in God's Day of Victory or the Day of the Lord. Daniel says that the Archangel Michael will guard God's faithful during their time of conflict and the Jewish symbol of God's Rule in the world is the coming of the 'Son of Man' on the clouds in great glory.

For Christians the symbol of God's Rule is the person of Jesus Christ. He uses the title 'Son of Man' to explain that through him God is ruling the world. In today's gospel reading, Jesus is teaching in the Temple just before his crucifixion. He has warned his disciples that the Temple would be destroyed and they would suffer in the persecutions that would follow. Naturally they wanted to know when, how and what were the signs of this happening.

Jesus told them that natural and environmental disasters, political and human conflicts were not signs of the end, but signs of the beginning of the end. In times of trial the disciples must act quickly, brave the storm and above all hold fast to the faith. The persecutions took place at the hands of the Jews as well as the Romans and the early Church also faced division among their own numbers. Yet through it all there were those who continued to proclaim the good news of Jesus and so grew the Church. As did the author of Daniel, Jesus said that those who persevere to the end will be saved, and the real end of persecution will only come with the return of the Son of Man to announce the Final Judgement.

Between the first coming of Christ in Bethlehem and his final coming, it is the Church that is the working Body of Christ which must assume the role of the Son of Man as the visible sign of God's Rule in the World. The Church is the bridge between Jesus' Resurrection and his final coming, but only if its members act as a community in which Christ is the centre of its life, and remain obedient to God's will. A divided or unfaithful Church cannot be a sign of God's Rule in the world.

The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that right belief is shown to us not only BY Jesus, but it IS Jesus. He has done everything that needs to be done to reconcile us to God because he himself was faithful to God's will.

In our day the Church is split into differing communions which are further divided into numerous factions. Real Church unity seems further away than ever and in many Western countries, Governments are trying to force Christians to abandon their Christian world view and embrace pagan secularism. Those who refuse may not be slaughtered as in some other places, but they are being cancelled, so the Christian voice is silenced.

Faithful Christians must remember that God's Truth is not determined by non-believers, nor is it determined by a majority vote of Church members. God's Truth is what he has revealed in and through Jesus Christ.

The end is not yet, but now but as in the time of Daniel and as in many periods in the Church's history, we are experiencing persecution. Once again it is vital we stick firmly to God and the faith of the Church so that God's reign is visible in the world so his purposes can be accomplished.

Keep the faith and share it too.

Msgr Harry Entwistle
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