

Fr. John's Homily - November 14, 2021

JMJ CHS

Every year at about this time our Catholic Church provides us with readings from *the apocalyptic literature* of the Bible at Masses and in the Office of Readings.

*Apocalypse* is a Greek word which means "revelation". And thus, the very last book of the Bible is known by either title, *The Apocalypse*, or *The Book of Revelation*. And it means a revealing or unveiling of things previously hidden -- a prophetic word about the future.

Today the first reading from the Prophet Daniel and comments by Jesus in Mark's Gospel are apocalyptic in nature. And if you have been following *Bishop Earl's Year of the Bible*, he is finishing up with *Revelation*, which he considers his favorite book.

Now depending on who you talk to, apocalyptic literature can be described as informative, exciting, consoling, mystical, confusing, prophetic, inspiring, or downright scary. There certainly are some incredible images to reflect on. And there has been a lot of reflection down through the ages as each generation wondered, 'Are they talking about us?'

And we are no different. But maybe we've got some very reasonable reasons to think these are the times. That *ours* is the generation.

Now from our Catholic-Christian perspective, we have always looked forward to the Second Coming of Christ. It will be huge. It will be there for all the world and everyone to see. It will be good for some and not so good for others. But when will it happen? Will it be sooner, or later?

Only a few years ago when anyone talked about this apocalyptic stuff, they would have risked being called a "doom and gloomer". Not so much the case anymore. We have seen too much recently to remain skeptical about these times.

The events of just these past few years have caused a lot of concern to growing numbers of people. And it doesn't matter who you are or what you believe in, it can take a big toll. Many people are upset, angry, confused and afraid. And it doesn't take too much imagination to see that the trajectory of what's happening in our culture is not leading ^up to the light .....but rather down to the darkness. There is not a whole lot that is positive out there..... and a lot of the things that we have read about in the Bible are suddenly taking on a new light.

Ok, let's start with the Gospel of Mark. He begins by saying, "... in those days after the tribulation...". What days? But what tribulation?

To answer that question, we should go back to the beginning of the chapter. Jesus and his Disciples have left at the temple area, crossed the Kidron Valley, and are now on the Mount of Olives. It would have been a great panoramic view, and one of the Disciples commented on the beauty of the temple. But Jesus tells him that it will all be destroyed. This is a prophetic apocalyptic statement. We know from history that it was, indeed, destroyed by the Romans about 40 years later in 70 A.D. And the events leading up to that were very much a tribulation for the Jews.

But Jesus goes on to say some things that seem to be referring, at least from our current perspective, not to those times, but to a time in the far distant future. And he warns them... ...us, to be on your guard. Don't be deceived. There will come false teachers claiming to speak on my behalf, imposters. Don't listen to them. It will be a time of wars and rumors of wars. He said that

there would be many claiming to be the messiah. Saying, "I am He!" Ignore them. You will be persecuted. Hauled into court. Family members will betray each other.

Well, all of this sounds quite familiar these days. It has been 100 years of wars fought on a worldwide scale. Millions of innocent people vanished, imprisoned, tortured, and killed.

Not to mention terrorism, natural disasters, and strange weather patterns. The break up of marriage and the family, the decline in morality, And deadly little beasts we call viruses.

And here is another key piece of information. Jesus said that before his return, the Gospel must first be preached to every nation. Well, with technology as it is today, no person is out of reach of the Gospel message. Everybody will have to eventually make a choice.

The general advice of the gospel today, then, is to be attentive to the signs of the times. Do not plant your head in the sand, do not go about your business as if nothing is happening. Don't be complacent, but watch, be on your guard, be prepared. "For at an hour you don't expect, the Son of Man will come."

Now how about the book of Daniel. This is about 500 years before Christ and the time of the Babylonian exile. In this passage, the Archangel Michael, the Prince of the Heavenly Host, is prophesied. The story again opens with those famous words, "in those days, after that time". What days? What time?

Well as the story goes, back in the late 1900's, Pope Leo XIII had a vision that scared him. I guess you would call it an apocalyptic vision about the future. He was so frightened that he immediately composed a prayer that was to be said every Sunday, in every Catholic Church all around the world. It is the one we pray before Mass..... "St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle..."

It was quite common for many years, then it disappeared in the 1960s, about the time of the Vatican Council. It began to reappear, back about 20 years ago, right after 9/11. The events of that day inspired a lot of us to restore that prayer to Mass and so it has remained as part of our 'new tradition' ever since.

But again, we have to ask, are these "those times" spoken of by the prophet Daniel so many years ago? "*A time unsurpassed in distress, since the world began.*"? A lot of people have been weighing in on the meanings of *these times*. On the one hand we have approved apparitions such as Fatima which have greatly influenced our understanding of these times. The Blessed Mother made predictions that have indeed come true in the 20th century.

And there have been many private revelations to mystics who frequently say things about the meaning of the times. Every now and then they mention a date. I.e. "It will all come crashing down next Thursday afternoon, at 3:15." Whenever you hear a date or a time, ignore it. Many people have walked around with egg on their face because of their dire predictions. The Gospel today told us that nobody knows the day or the hour .....except the Father.

Nevertheless, there are individuals out there that, well, I like to listen to. They make sense to me. Or at least I hope that what they have to say is true and does come to pass. And the sooner the better.

When I spoke about this last year in the midst of the Covid crisis, it was Christine Watkins. She wrote the book called *The Warning, Testimonies and Prophecies about the Illumination of Conscience* and the three days of darkness. There were many candle sales in our book

store/gift shop and I have blessed many of them. Many of the people described in her book have already endured their own illuminations, have repented, and have now gone on to preach the message to the world in various ways. Christine is one of them.

This special appearance of Jesus to everyone in the world has even been confirmed in the diary of St. Faustina. Jesus, in one final act of mercy, will reveal everybody's conscience to them. Everyone's whole life will flash before their eyes and they will see all the sins they have ever committed, and all the wounds they have inflicted on others. It will be very painful for some. But, we will be given the option of repenting and being forgiven -- or not. And the message says that there will be many, probably because of their pride, who will not be able to repent. Needless to say, sad for them.

Another person that I like to listen to reminds me a lot of Rev. Billy Graham. He is quite a dynamic preacher. He is a Jewish rabbi but a Christian convert. Jonathon Cahn, author of *The Harbinger* books. He is easily found on YouTube.

He has made some very interesting connections between what happened to the Jews way back then and what has happened, *is happening*, *is yet to happen*, to **us**, in the present, and I am talking specifically about the United States. The rabbi says America needs spiritual revival. America needs to repent and be saved.

I told you at the beginning that there are many people who come to me who are upset and angry about what's going on in the world. That is totally understandable, but, there is *ancient advice* for us who believe in Jesus and trust in His mercy. And, interestingly, the advice comes to us from that first reading of Daniel. At the very end it says:

*"But the wise shall shine brightly  
like the splendor of the firmament,  
and those who lead the many to justice  
shall be like the stars forever."*

That is a great encouragement for us! That is, for the believing and practicing Christian.

Be wise, then. Be strong, and carry on. Don't give up. Don't throw in the towel. Strive every day for greater holiness. Fight the good fight. Run the race, Keep the faith. Detach yourself, to the degree that you are able, from this twisted and depraved generation. Make sure your name is found written in the book.

*For he who endures to the end, shall be saved,  
and will also be used to help save many others as well.*

~Fr. John