

The Last Sunday after Pentecost

November 26, 2017

The Gospel today speaks of the terrifying last days that will precede our Lord's return at the end of time. It is going to be a difficult time, but it is also going to be a time of grace, and so we must prepare ourselves for those days. We prepare for these days by faithfully practicing our Faith, virtues and charity. In other words, we must keep growing in holiness. Stocking up on food and building a bunker is not going to help in any way. No one can hide from our Lord when He comes, and so if we are wise, we will prepare with a sincere desire to purify ourselves and serve our Lord in our neighbor. We do not know when He will come. There are signs, but these can be difficult to interpret. Just think of those who lived through the Black Plague. They were convinced that the end of the world had come. Many died in those days, but the world continues even today.

We cannot know when the end of the world will come. We read in the Gospels of Ss. Matthew and Mark: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." (Matt 24:36 and Mark 13:32) St. Thomas says that the time of the future judgment is unknown, for this knowledge is most fittingly reserved to the Father Himself, since the end of the world and the day of judgment will be the result of the Divine Power alone, without any co-operation of a created cause, just as the world received its existence immediately from God. St. Thomas says that our Lord seems to assign this very reason when He said: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His own Power", (Acts 1:7), which is to say which are reserved to His power alone.

We do not need specific knowledge of when Christ is going to come again, as there was in the prophecies concerning the first coming in the flesh. That day had to be clearly foretold in order for us to recognize that it is He who has come, for He came secretly and humbly. But the Second Coming will be open and manifest, such that there can be no error concerning the knowledge of His coming.

In today's gospel, Christ warns us of the false prophets, so that we will not be easily deceived, and then He uses a powerful simile to show us how manifest His coming will be. "For as the lightning in the East appears also in the West, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt 24:27), and again: "and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty." (Matt 24:30)

The saints desired to live in the last days because they knew God's grace will also abound. Let us not live in fear of these times, rather, let us persevere at our good works and prayers so that we are truly ready for our Lord when He comes. If we treat each other as we would treat Christ Himself, then when He does come, our meeting with Him will be as dear friends meeting again.

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