

Our Lady of Lourdes
Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time
November 15, 2009

Readings

Daniel 12:1-3

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32

Deacon Bob

As we prepare to end the Church year and begin the season of Advent in two weeks we are reminded of the end times. The language can be scary. We should not take the readings literally but we should take them seriously. Many like to predict the end is coming. A young boy and his brother went downtown with their Mom. As they were standing on the street corner waiting to cross a voice from a street-corner preacher came blasting over a bull horn saying, the end of the world was coming and soon. The boy looked at his mother with fear in his eyes and asked Mom is he telling the truth? Is the world really going to end? His Mom found a way to calm his fears without giving him a pat answer.

Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in that kind of terror that everything we believe in is being threatened. Sometimes life may seem completely upside down. In fact we face endings everyday. The Good News today is not just a warning about the end but the fact that the more difficult the times we find ourselves in the closer we are to God and God to us. Jesus promises us for every ending there is a new and glorious beginning, both now and at our death.

None of us likes to think about death, our own or of those we love. Death is a part of life. In the waters of Baptism we die with Christ and rise with Him to new life. We live our lives in between times. In between Jesus' first coming as our Redeemer and his second coming when all will be brought to completion. We live in between but Jesus comes to us in this time as well.

When our oldest son was a teenager he would sometimes walk in his sleep. He also would talk while walking. My wife found this very useful. She would ask him questions about what might be going on in his life. They had some interesting conversations. Sometimes we seem to go through life sleep walking. Times when we are filled with things that are piling up, deadlines, household chores, family responsibilities, financial worries, illness and death of someone we love. It may seem like the world at least our world is coming to an end. Then like the leaves on Jesus' fig tree we see signs of hope, a kind word from a coworker, help from a family member, ten dollars found in a pocket, joy in the midst of suffering.

We all like to look at pictures especially of babies. Good photographers are always ready to take a picture at just the right moment which often times comes much unexpected. It may be a picture of a baby smiling, or a person scoring a goal in soccer or of a butterfly appearing without warning. Jesus in the readings today is telling us to be ready, ultimately to be ready at the end of our life but also to be ready to see his presence in every single moment of our life on this earth.

Damien was born two and one-half months before his due date. His early arrival caused upheaval in his family's life that was not fully prepared for the necessities of their newborn child. There are many unexpected turns and twist in our lives. Sometimes events are challenging but they can cause us to think in new ways, to broaden our perspective.

There was a news story about a man who studied volcanoes. He was being interviewed by a news reporter in Hawaii where they were watching lava flow from an active volcano. They could actually see the hot lava hitting the water, cooling and expanding the land they were standing on. It is often the same way with each of us, we experience a conflict and sometimes we too erupt. Afterwards we acquire a new understanding with an expanded outlook. The premature birth of Damien caused much commotion and required that schedules be changed. His presence also increased the joy in his family and helped everyone to be more aware of life's precious gifts.

Most of us could easily produce a list of consequences we would love to avoid. Wouldn't it be great to be able to go to an all you can eat buffet and really eat all we could and come away not feeling stuffed. Perhaps we would like to spend money like crazy but not sink onto debt. We would like to live on the couch but enjoy the appearance of one who goes to the gym. We would like our fortunes to rise and never fall. Of course this is not reality. There are beginnings and endings in our life. There are consequences.

Today we are reminded to be prepared to see God in the end times but also to recognize his presence in all the times of our lives. He is surely present to us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. We see his presence in the beauty of His created world and in all the circumstances and the people in our lives. He is especially present to us in the turmoil of our lives. On this mid November day we are at the end of another Church year and in our part of the world the end of fall and the beginning of winter. We end as we always should in thanksgiving for the many gifts that God has given us. We begin, as we should with faith, hope and trust that God is with us in the beginning and the end and in all the in between times of our lives.