**THIRTY - THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 11/17/2024**

Times are not what they used to be, this certainly can be said of the last four years. We have witnessed the wars in Ukraine, Middle East, Sudan and the Corona Virus. Add to all that hurricanes, terrible tsunami’s, fires and draughts.

On top of all that we have today’s scripture warning us of dire catastrophes and disasters to come to the whole universe. That is why some of the more fundamentalist religions tell us the times are so bad that the **end is near** and some will say it is God’s punishment for our sins.

**First of all,** the Catholic outlook is that our God is not a God of wrath and revenge, but rather a God of **Mercy**. Jesus revealed that.

Today’s readings indeed sound scary but we must keep in mind that Jesus is simply using the language of His culture. He borrows imagery language from Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Zachariah. It is not so much a description of end times as it is a proclamation and an **assurance** that **Jesus is Lord** of all history.

While we take apocalyptic language seriously, we do not take it literally. In fact, the central message of this week’s readings is that the more difficult times we encounter in life, the nearer we are to God. That is when there is only one set of footprints namely, His! Our Faith calls us to embrace God’s **closeness** rather than our **fears.** At the first glance one could see today’s readings and the times we live in as a **gloom** message. But a closer reading reveals a message of **hope** for all of us, especially for those living in **gloom** situations. In the meantime, we keep in mind that **God is near**, **at the gates** - the gates of our hearts.

**Therefore**, we live as a people of **hope** - like the leaves on a fig tree in the spring - do you and I see signs of **hop**e in our midst? With the eyes of Faith, are we able to read the gentle signs of God’s presence amid the turbulence of our lives? Do we see the multitude of ways He comes to us each day through our inspirations, other people and events, as well as through the scriptures and the sacraments?

As our Faith grows, we are able to see God in our challenges. God speaks to us in our joys, and He shouts to us in our pain.

**With the church year** coming to an end, the scriptures call us to reflect on the shortness of our earthly lives and to prepare for our **death** by living according to Jesus’ word - a word that is summed up in **loving God** and **one another**.

This is why you and I can leave here today radiating **joyful hope**, because as we come to Him in Holy Communion, “**He is very near** right now, and **eventually we are totally His.**”