

## HOMILY FOR 33<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

1. Noticed the thrill people get about the end of world
  - a. A while back there was all kinds of speculation about the world ending in December
    - i. Mayan calendar comes to an end
  - b. Another speculation a church in Rome has medallions with portraits of all the Popes
    - i. One place I hear 2 left, another said 14 left
    - ii. But legend is once those medallions are used up, world will end
  - c. Y2k fears about computers at turn of century
  - d. Like the thrill of roller coasters, speculating on end of world seems exciting
2. Gospel at first seems to be invoking
  - a. Images of sun being darkened and stars falling from the sky
  - b. Son of Man coming with power and glory sending out angels to gather people from winds
  - c. At first it looks like Jesus is trying to scare us
3. Important to recognize the context of this language
  - a. Like the book of Daniel in the first reading, the gospel is being written for a people struggling with persecution
  - b. Jewish leaders see Christians as the most recent heretics challenging their faith and identity
  - c. They have been kicking Christians out of the synagogues
  - d. Along with the Jews, the Christians are seen as suspect by their pagan neighbors
  - e. Early Christians were even called atheists because believed in only one God
  - f. Gathering to pray as a group, and speaking of eating Body and Blood of their God probably seemed downright strange to pagans,
  - g. Even seen as subversive, since they refused to worship the Emperor and claimed there was a higher authority
4. When things went wrong the pagans would blame the Christians
  - a. Emperor Nero started a fire to clean out some slum areas of Rome
  - b. Lost control of fire and it burned a significant part of the city
  - c. Nero blamed the Christians for the fire, many were martyred or else forced to leave Rome
5. Mark is writing to a people who are suffering for their faith
  - a. When the world seems to be against you, you will begin to wonder, are they right is there something wrong with me
  - b. They also probably saw weaknesses of each other and their leaders
  - c. We know that Paul had an argument with Peter about his failing to respect the Gentile Christians when Jewish Christian were on the scene
  - d. Mark's gospel often points out the failures of the Apostles to really understand Jesus
  - e. These persecutions and internal squabbling would have felt like the sun was darkened
  - f. The original excitement of joining the new faith of Christ was being tested both by external suffering and internal tensions
  - g. Christians were looking forward to an end of their suffering, they needed hope
6. Mark remembers words of Jesus and the lesson about the fig tree
  - a. Jesus promised to come and vindicate their faith just as He rose from the dead
  - b. Though they may be in a winter of struggle right now, trust that there will be a spring
  - c. Just as after the struggle of a winter in the spring the fig tree's branches begin to soften and spout leaves, you know you can look forward to joys of summer
  - d. Even though things may look dark now with all the persecution and dissension, this darkness is a sign of hope for a new life

7. In our own days we have our own struggles and darkness
  - a. We may have loved ones who no longer believe in the Church, maybe not even in God
  - b. We have just come through a campaign season in which nasty accusations have been made against people seeking office
  - c. There are fears and dissension about the future of our country
  - d. There are disagreements even within the Church over major questions of right and wrong and how they should be dealt with
  - e. The weaknesses of our leaders both in Church and government tends to be well publicized
8. We may feel a lot like the early Christians that we are immersed in darkness
  - a. Feel where is the sun and moon, where are the stars
  - b. Jesus encourages us not to give up
  - c. This darkness is really a sign of hope
  - d. Jesus is coming, He is offering hope in a new life
  - e. As he so often says do not be afraid
  - f. The darkness will not overcome, He is coming into our lives
  - g. He will change the world and one day we will rejoice in the warmth of his love