

First Sunday of Advent, 28 November 2021

Scriptures: Jer.33:14-16; 1Thess.3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28,34-36

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the Gospel pericope, Jesus makes it clear, using deliberately alarming language and imagery, that one day all of creation will come to an end.

Just as everyday things come to an end on a small scale, so the whole of creation will come to an end on a universal scale.

Of course, that happens to each of us individually, at the hour of our own death.

But it will also happen one day to everything that exists. Of course, we humans could destroy our own home, the Earth, either in an all-out nuclear war, or by refusing to contain climate change, as Pope Francis continues to warn us. If we are good to our home planet, and the sun is good for another 4 million years, then we'll be ok for a while anyway.

But at some point, the entire universe will all end, and that is the point we reference when we say, "Jesus will come again in glory".

Jesus also teaches that each one of us will be called by God to give an account of our stewardship of all the gifts that we have been given by God.

Through Baptism we are called to build up the kingdom of God in this world, and to look forward to eternal life with God. It is good to reflect during Advent on whether we are making proper use of the gifts that God has given us, both spiritual and material. Serious as these thoughts are, they need to be put into the context that Jesus gives us. "When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation

is near at hand". The purpose of contemplating the day of judgement is to help us to be free to respond to it; to live with a freedom from false cares and false pleasures.

Jesus also tells us how to prepare for "judgement day". He calls us to "stay awake and to pray". Not everyone—hardly anyone—can physically stay awake all the time.

In the context of the Gospel, "staying awake" simply means keeping awareness of spiritual realities, an awareness of the brevity of life and the reality of eternity.

It is a way of speaking about a "spiritual mindfulness". Another way we stay awake is by living a prayerful, sacramental life. By doing that, we share in the prayers and good works of every other member of the Church spread all over the Earth. So whatever hour of the day it is, there is always somewhere on Earth where the Church is praying and engaging actively in serving all those in need, physically and spiritually.

A popular religious hymn expresses it quite well: "We thank Thee that Thy Church unsleeping, / While Earth rolls onward into light, / Through all the world her watch is keeping, / And rests not now by day or night".

If we maintain the bond of love and service among us, we mutually share in our spiritual and pastoral works, and we share in each other's life of faith.

-end-