

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

November 16, 2025

“End in Fire, End in Ice?”

This weekend’s Gospel accurately reflects the feelings of many of us these days: Our Lord’s gloomy forecast about a destroyed Jerusalem Temple; “*wars and insurrections*”; “*nation rising against nation*”; “*powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues*”; and if that was not bad enough, persecution, betrayal, and hatred, even from family members. It’s quite depressing, isn’t it?

And it actually happened—a holocaust in Jerusalem around 70 A.D. where six thousand refugees perished in the flames of the Temple, more than a million Jews were put to the sword, and almost a hundred thousand hustled in chains to Rome. All these things were predicted by Jesus forty years before they took place.

The Gospel is a sober and saving Word, and the *Lectionary* readings are a carefully arranged selection for reflection. The liturgy tells the story of our salvation. To quote Father Walter Burghardt (*Lovely in Eyes Not His*, 134-39):

We began last Advent through a prophet, a precursor, and a pregnant teenager—Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Mary of Nazareth. We shared Israel’s longing for a Savior. We sang “Glory to God” with the angels at Christmas when he came into our hearts anew. We grew up with him in wisdom in the silent decades of his adolescence. We walked the dust of Judea to hear him preach about the Kingdom. We ate His Flesh at the Last Supper, groaned with him at Gethsemane, watched him die beneath the Cross, rose with him three days later, ascended with him to the Father, and felt the movement of the Spirit at Pentecost. And through summer and fall months, we listened to Luke’s account of Our Lord’s life and ministry.

Now the final act of the liturgical drama is upon us. Next Sunday, the curtain will fall as we celebrate Christ the King of hearts. But not yet. Today, we are reminded that everything we know in this paradoxical planet is destined to disappear. There will be signs in the sky and wars in the world as Christ the Lord establishes his kingdom and fights the final battle through us.

In the meantime, as we wait, good and evil will fight it out. We will struggle with wars and insurrections, in places like Gaza and Ukraine overseas, and Chicago and Los Angeles at home. We will struggle to put food on the table and pay high insurance premiums. We will struggle with demons outside and evil inside us.

As we struggle, we are called to walk the Journey of Faith. The Journey of Faith is a difficult journey, a painful journey, but a hopeful journey because we are not walking alone: Christ, who died and rose, is with us in Word and Sacrament.

What is Our Lord's message as we walk this Journey of Faith in these "end times"? Persevere. Persevere in deep faith. Persevere in constant commitment. Persevere in obedience to the Church. Persevere in love of God and neighbor. Perseverance is determination and persistence to keep going despite obstacle or opposition.

A poem puts it well:

*Two frogs fell into a can of cream;
or so I've heard it told.
The sides of the can were shiny and steep,
The cream was deep and cold.
"Oh, what's the use?" croaked number one.
"Tis fate, no help's around.
Goodbye, my friend.
Goodbye, sad world"
And weeping still, he drowned.*

*But number two, of sterner stuff,
dog-paddled in surprise.
The while he wiped his creamy face,
and dried his creamy eyes.
"I'll swim awhile at least," he said.
Or so I've heard he said,
"It really wouldn't help the world
If one more frog was dead.*

*An hour or two he kicked and swam
Not once he stopped to mutter
But kicked and kicked, and swam and kicked
then hopped out, via butter.*

How do we persevere in these “end times”? When Jesus knocked Saint Paul off his horse on the way to Damascus, and Paul asked “*What shall I do, Lord?*” (Acts 22:10), Jesus answered: “*Rise and go into the city, and you will be told what to do*” (Acts 9:6). “*Go into the city.*” That means simply go where people are, look into someone’s eyes, listen to his words, and minister to her needs. And Christ will tell you what to do from there. When he does . . . he will come to you again.”

God bless you.