

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Nov. 17-18, 2018, Cycle B

All things come to an end. This is most immediately true of the liturgical year, which concludes two weeks from now on Saturday, December 1st, at sundown as we enter into Advent. Next weekend we celebrate our last Sunday of liturgical year 2018, proclaiming Jesus Christ to be our king reigning in glory forever. This Sunday as we draw nearer to the close of the liturgical year, both the Old Testament Book of David and Mark's Gospel invite us into an apocalyptic mindset. An apocalyptic mindset is a point of view that proclaims that the worst of times (ironically) will give birth to the best of times. It seems every generation has its groups of people who proclaim we are living in the worst of times.

The word "apocalypse" simply means "revelatory" or "uncovering." The Book of Revelation in the New Testament is part of the Bible's apocalyptic writing. The Gospel passage we have from Mark's Gospel this weekend comes from a tradition called the synoptic Apocalypse. The other two synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke, have parallel accounts of Jesus' teaching about the end of creation and the last judgement. By a very long tradition, the Catholic Church reads from these Synoptic Apocalyptic accounts at the end of one liturgical year and the beginning the new liturgical year with Advent. Thus, two weeks from now, on the First Sunday of Advent, we will read Luke's apocalyptic passage.

The Apocalyptic literature of the scriptures do represent a panorama of destruction! Jesus talks about the sun being darkened, the moon will give up its light and the stars fall from the sky. The Book of Daniel says the end "shall be a time unsurpassed in distress." However, the intent of Apocalyptic literature was not to instill fear in believers, but to offer hope. If we are on the alert, why does Jesus tell the parable of the fig tree and to be always prepared, like the wise steward for his master's return, then we have nothing to fear.

The great South American theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez said: "hope is ... the conviction that God is at work in our lives and in our world." No matter how terrible the present age we are living in, hope for disciples of Jesus is the certainty that God can transform and is transforming any situation into an occasion of grace. Again, why Jesus told the parable of the fig tree! See the signs of a new spring – signs solely almost impossible like in the World War II era. Jesus' own community lived in a time of great turmoil, but He encouraged his disciples to open their eyes and see God transforming the world around them in those acts of kindness and love performed by others - signs that the risen Christ is at work in the world, no matter how imperceptible.

While teaching us to be disciples of hope – even in the midst of turmoil – Jesus at the same time encourages us also to accept the mystery of it all – and allow God to work in his own good time. While we can recognize God at work, and cooperate with God's work, the work of life and love is still God's. In our yearning for complete joy, we cannot reach God. In the end Jesus warns: "... of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Ours is to remain alert with hope!