

Sunday, November 18, 2012 – Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Prepared by Father John McAuley, MM, Dalian, China

Daniel 12:1-3; Psalms 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32

The readings today have the flavor of “end times.” Indeed, we draw very near the end of our year-long liturgical journey of faith. Next week, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. Unfortunately, often the flavor of that day includes a hint of apology -- apology for the seemingly outdated symbol of “kingship.” But today’s readings provide an insight that will allow us to make a proclamation next week of Christ’s kingship that is meaningful for us and critical for our age.

The reading from Hebrews reminds us that the throne of Christ the King was the cross, upon which hung the proclamation, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”; a beaten, exhausted, nailed, immobile and powerless king. He did all the right things, sowed all the right seeds, diagnosed and effected a measure of healing for many of the physical, religious, social and political ills afflicting his time and ours, his people and ours. But those efforts were not enough in themselves, either singly or aggregately, to make definitive ontological or eschatological changes during his lifetime in the concrete issues he addressed. It took a consummating intervention of God, his Father and ours, through the Holy Spirit, to transform his life of faith and his faith-filled actions into the powerful instruments of change that they still are; in his case, the consummating intervention being raised from the dead, the start of his resurrected life.

Similarly, our lives of faith, our witness, our conversions, our sowing of seeds, our outreach to others, our interventions in Church, society and civic life, even in aggregate over a lifetime, do not of themselves become instruments of ontological and eschatological change that is the breaking in of the Kingdom of God. They require a transformation. Like Jesus himself, like today’s authors of Hebrews and the Book of Revelations, like Job and the prophets, like the writers and pray-ers of the Psalms, we too must await that same type of transforming and consummating intervention of God which made Jesus into a victorious King rather than simply a socially engaged rabbi.

As the psalmist wrote, “How long, O Lord?,” while actively living out our faith, how long might we find ourselves waiting on God? Today’s Gospel reminds us there is no definitive answer to this age-old question: “But about that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” However, this does not mean that there are no perceptible signs or interim steps being affected even now. A person of faith today cannot read current news events without discerning that there are powerful movements of spirit and effective Spirit-filled actions afoot around the world; stirrings and actions of persons and communities that arise from aspirations for fruits that ultimately are of the Spirit: peace, justice, freedom, dignity, truth, equality, and hope.

These awakened aspirations are what most threaten those entrenched interests and systems that create, direct and enshrine values that foster their antitheses: discord, injustice, indignity, inequality, untruths, and despair. And we are both surprised and privileged to see before our very eyes that some of these anti-kingdom entities and systems have either already succumbed to economic, social and political forces, or feel their existence being radically challenged by them; and so they respond with greater censorship, increased repression, and the creation of diversionary issues and political initiatives.

It just might be that these public events and corresponding reactions are both signs and actual enactments of a breaking through and breaking out of the Kingdom in our midst as we continue to wait with biblical patience, faith and hope for the ripening of the Kingdom’s harvest planted by and through us, faithful disciples for this age.

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