

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday (C)

13<sup>th</sup> November 2016

‘Remembrance’

Mal 3: *the day is coming now, burning like a furnace ...*

Ps 97: *the Lord comes, He comes to rule the earth.*

2Thess 3: *go on quietly working and earning the food you eat.*

Lk 21: 5–19: *when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened ...*

The readings of this penultimate Sunday of the year seem to be proclaiming ‘The End of the World.’ It’s typical of the end of the Church year to hear such readings. Jesus speaks of “wars and revolutions, ... earthquakes, plagues and famines”: calamities that indeed we seem to see around us without fail as we watch/read/listen to the news. But, as Jesus also said, “The end is not so soon.” The apostles may have believed that the End of the World was around the corner; that Jesus would come in glory in His ‘Second Coming’ just a few years after His Ascension, perhaps in their lifetime, but in fact that was not the case. Here we are, 2000 yrs after the Ascension, still awaiting the end of time, yet none the wiser as to when this world will have its end.

The month of November is full of remembrances, especially an acknowledgment of our own mortality, our own earthly end. The month’s prayers and Masses for the

Holy Souls; our remembrance on Armistice Day; and this Remembrance Sunday of the war dead, ... All these memories are sombre thoughts as we reflect on this world, and our short life within it.

And yet, in the midst of all these thoughts of mortality, comes the brilliant shining light of the Gospel. Into the darkness of death shines the bright light of Jesus’s Resurrection, and the hope that He brings. Just as, when Jesus implies that His followers will be persecuted by the world around them, He also tells them that He will be with them, giving them an eloquence that none can overcome. This eloquence is the Word of Truth that is Jesus. And, as He says, “Your endurance will win you your lives.”

In the face of death and the struggle of life — the things that might get us down — Jesus promises Himself, His own life at the heart of ours: not just some vague good example, but His very life and breath, His Sacraments and His Spirit, to inhabit our lives and let us live with His own immortal indestructible life. And this is what sustains us each day of our life: the fact that this life is not all that there

is, but that in fact He wants us to enjoy something far greater, far better, far happier, far more enduring, in eternal life. “Your endurance will win you your lives,” He says ... Our being faithful to Him in this world means that He will reward us for our faithfulness in the next world. We long for that life, don’t we? We long to be free of the struggles and disappointments here below, to be united in faith for ever with the Lord of Glory, in His Resurrection, and with those that we pray will also be with Him, our loved ones. And this is the point of our prayer for the dead: that they and we shall all enjoy the presence of God in holiness for ever together. For that to be the case, both they and we need the forgiveness of our sins; and for this we strive, through the devotions and sacraments that the Lord Jesus has given us here in the Church. He gave us these for our holiness, so that we would not fall away from Him, but be His for ever.

So as we take stock, this Remembrance Sunday, as we remember the various dead that are dear to us, let’s promise ourselves to Christ once more at this year’s end.

Let’s ask Him to keep us faithful, to keep our endurance up, keep us devoted to the Sunday Mass and to our daily prayers; and keep up our loving sacrifices for those whom we have known here on earth who have “gone before us marked with the sign of faith” and for whom we pray often.

It’s the mark of the Church that we are one in Christ: Our Lady and the saints pray for us; we here below pray for the dead; one day the Church on earth will be praying for us too that we enter heaven ... The Church is one undivided community of faith, a sign that humanity should all be one before God in Christ ... Let us live that out today as we gather around the one altar of Jesus, and offer to God the sacrifice that Jesus once offered on the Cross, for the intended salvation of all mankind. Let’s remind ourselves that as we offer this sacrifice, He truly comes to be with us, the Son of God, offering His perfect love to God the Father on our behalf. Filled with His presence, we know that He, in us, can overcome all things, even death. This is our consolation when we are bereaved — this is the source of our joy as His Christian people.