

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

17<sup>th</sup> November 2019

'Parish deceased'

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 ...*

Our Lord Jesus in this passage from Luke tonight/today, which is very much an end-of-the-Church-year passage, both alludes to the horrors that the world sometimes has to face — wars, revolutions, plagues, famines — and also provides a much-needed message of hope amidst such trials and tribulations. It also reminds us forcefully that the life of the world to come is the goal to which we are heading, and that even death itself cannot separate us from the love of Christ. In fact, as we hear, Our Lord praises those who give their very lives for Christ — His blessed martyrs — and reminds us that “your endurance will win you your lives.”

All this blessed encouragement, not to get frightened by wars and revolutions (by the daily news from across the world!), and even by the inevitability of the mortal death of ourselves and our loved ones, so as to preserve our soul holy and spotless for the next life, is particularly relevant as we

remember and pray for the deceased of the past year. You may well be bringing in your prayers this weekend loved ones you have lost recently — but we pray in particular for those 33 whose funerals have been celebrated here over the past 12 months: parishioners, ex-parishioners, relatives of parishioners. Whether young or old, they have touched our lives in special ways, and whilst none of them was perfect, yet we have the confidence to pray for them and for their eternal happiness, since the Lord constantly offers us hope.

I think that especially when our loved ones have lived their Christian life faithfully from start to finish, we owe them a particular sense of gratitude for the example of their life. Those who have gone to the Lord in death, but till the very end have clung tenaciously and prayerfully to the Lord Jesus, despite often many medical challenges, are such blessings to us, for they portray that very teaching of Jesus, “your endurance will win you your lives.” It is of particular comfort, isn't it, when we know that they tried their very best to live closely to Jesus, manifest His love to others, and to convert their lives away from sin and frailty. We are then

so much the more peaceful, I think, about their deaths, having great hope that in their departing they were graced by a holy death. And not just that, but we draw such strength from them for our own lives as Catholic believers. They prove to us that it is possible, faithfully and to the end, to live the Christian life well. If they can do it, then so can we, with God's help. His grace strengthened them through the trials of life, and that proves to us also that the Lord's promises are real: He will assist us too, in all our necessities, if we cling to Him always in great faith.

In my recent visit to Egypt, it was heart-warming and very touching to see the Christian community — both Orthodox and Catholic — living joyfully amidst great trials. Bishops and their people, monks and missionaries, sisters and seminarians, all committed to their faith in a land that is sometimes hostile to them. One of the most moving sights was to see the pillars in a church in Cairo which still bear the scars of the bomb blast that killed 29 at Mass on December 11<sup>th</sup> only 3 yrs ago. But the church is open, the parish thrives — the police are on the gates, admittedly; and

we had a police escort ourselves, all week — but there was nothing to be worried about: “do not be frightened,” says Jesus, “Your endurance will win you your lives.”

Let's dig deep into ourselves, let's find those new wells of commitment that spring from real love for God. Encouraged by the martyrs, especially those of our own day; encouraged by our departed loved ones, especially those who shouldered great burdens yet kept the faith — let's renew our promises to the Lord that we will love Him, serve Him, honour and adore Him, to the end of our days. No greater happiness can come to us than through this blessed use of the life God has given us.

As the 1<sup>st</sup> reading proclaimed: “For you who fear My Name, the sun of righteousness will shine out with healing in its rays.”