

33rd Sunday...Year C

Final Things

Introduction

Show a crumpled 20 dollar bill. Do you want this old, dirty, crumpled 20 dollar bill? Why?

Money is important in our society. It's right up there with air.

How this approach to life contrasts with the theme of today's Liturgy is startling...

For today's Liturgy, as we approach the end of the Catholic Worship year, deals with what has traditionally been called The Last Things, viz., Heaven, Hell, the Final Coming of Christ, The Final Judgment.

Refrain: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

I Worry

The Final Things is not exactly something that most people think about often.

Instead we worry about... money, health, kids, grandkids, the future of our country?

However, as Catholics who are coming to the end of our Liturgical Year, our worship year... and getting ready to start over with Advent and Christmas, we are reminded that worrying about our own agenda too much can get us into bondage to ourselves and self-centered.

The Church helps us see the broader sweep of our lives – our lives are not just about us. God is a part of our lives and the Church year helps us remember – how quickly we forget – helps us remember the wonder of God among us, the wonder of God's love for us beginning with creation, moving through the Old Testament and into the time of Jesus and beyond...

We are reminded that God has some skin in our game.

In today's Gospel Jesus warns that there will be tough times for those of us who are disciples of Jesus... There will be persecution and ridicule and rejection.

But Jesus promises to be with us, to uphold us, to strengthen us. What an encouraging promise.

Don't we need encouragement in our lives today?

In some areas of our world Christians are psychically persecuted today. This is certainly true in areas governed by ISIS where Christians are not only mistreated, but beheaded and even crucified.

The song of the martyrs echoes once again throughout Christendom: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O death, where is your victory. .. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 15:56-57)

We might not be persecuted bodily. But in our society to speak in behalf of the culture of life, the sacredness of life from womb to tomb – to hold these values might lead to ridicule, misunderstanding and harsh rhetoric.

Refrain: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

II In The Meantime

Should we worry about the Final Things?

I would suggest that we follow the lead of our Pope and be concerned about how we live our discipleship, our Catholic vocation, in our daily lives.

Our Pope challenges us not to be self-centered and self-pampered with consumerism and entertainment, or overwhelmed by our worries and fears. He encourages us to bring God's mercy and compassion to our world. Our life is not about what we take from the table of life, but what we bring to the table of life. This is how we will be judged at the end of life. Mathew 25 tells us that when we come before the Lord He will ask us:

- Did you feed the hungry?
- Did you clothe the naked?
- Did you visit the sick or those imprisoned?

The *Prayer of St. Francis* asks God to help us to be God's instruments in our world...

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, not of hatred or anger or resentments or greed or envy or lust...

God wants us to bring God's Kingdom into our world and that's how we will be judged by our loving God. We're not perfect, we make mistakes, we slip and slide, we make wrong turns on our journey... no one is perfect. But I always ask... Do we bring more light than darkness into our world?

Where will we be headed at the end of our life?

Refrain: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

III A Funeral

We recently had a funeral of a friend of mine. The Church was packed mostly with men. Not all of them were Catholic. Not all of them were 'churched'... but all of them had been touched by my friend on the journey of their lives. God had used my friend as an instrument of peace.

- Where there was hatred he tried to bring love.
- Where there was doubt he tried to bring faith.
- Where there was despair he tried to bring hope.
- Where there was darkness, light.

How does that Prayer of St. Francis end?

- For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

What will they say about us when we die?

None of us are perfect, but do we try to bring more light into our world than darkness?

Refrain: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

IV Heaven and Hell

A vision of heaven and earth...
Heaven and Hell

Hell... Picture a circle of people sitting side by side, so close to each other that their shoulders are touching. In the center of this circle is a big pot of delicious looking and smelling stew. The scent of it makes you want to try some right now.

The folks in the circle have a large wooden spoon with a long handle taped to their right forearms. They are yelling at each other angrily, they looked lean and hungry... there was no happiness there. The problem was that because they were so close together they couldn't get a spoon of the delicious stew into their mouths. They would bump into each other when they tried to feed themselves.

This is truly hell.

Heaven... Picture a circle of people sitting side by side, so close to each other that their shoulders are touching. In the center of this circle is a big pot of delicious looking and smelling stew. The scent of it makes you want to try some right now.

The folks in the circle have a large wooden spoon with a long handle taped to their right forearms. These folks are happy and joyful, smiling and joking, and well fed.

What's the difference... ah, then you notice it. Each person is dipping his or her spoon into the stew, and then feeding each other. They are taking care of each other first.

Refrain: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Conclusion

As we come to this Eucharist we remember where we are headed... our hope of heavenly joy in God's presence.

We also realize that we have a little bit of heaven here Jesus invites us to dine at his table, here before us... a foretaste of our heavenly banquet to which we are all invited. We are so precious to Jesus... he shed his blood for us. Do we realize that? Do we thank him?

As we continue with this Mass, we now have the privilege of offering our lives once again together with Jesus as we remember His offering His life to His Father.

And we come forward to dine at the Lord's table.

Thank you God. Thank you Jesus.

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

Thank you Lord. Thank you Good Shepherd.
Thank you my God. Thank you my Jesus.
Thank you my Lord. Thank you my Good Shepherd.

Refrain: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.