

Homily for the Thirty-Third Sunday of the Year 2022

“Your endurance will win you your lives.”

The Headteacher of a prestigious school was asked what was he preparing his pupils for? **“Death”** was his answer, which not surprisingly was received with some puzzlement.

I think that what he meant by this response was that he was preparing them to live good lives so that at the end of their lives they would die a good death.

The Readings of today’s Mass turn our attention to the end of time – to the Day of the Lord. Traditionally the Church speaks of **“The Four Last Things”**, that is **Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell**. The Church draws our attention to these things because it wishes us to reflect on the purpose of our lives, and to help us concentrate on the things that are of vital importance, the things that really matter.

Of Death we realise, especially as we get older, that death will come to us for certain and we begin to accept this reality peacefully. St. Francis of Assisi praised God for **“our Sister, the Death of the Body”**. We are encouraged to invoke the help of Saint Joseph, the patron of the dying, that we would die a happy death. Death is the gateway to eternal life.

Of Judgement the Church teaches that at our death we will each face an immediate judgement, and this judgement will have one of three consequences. Firstly, we will be brought into eternal life with God (The Beatific Vision) Secondly, we will forfeit the gift and joy of eternal life because we have rejected God’s loving and merciful invitation to share His life. God will never condemn us to Hell, it can only come about through our unwillingness to seek God’s Mercy for our sins; our refusal to come to the wedding feast.

Finally, we will undergo a period in Purgatory, which is a welcome and joyous time when our souls are purified and made ready for eternal happiness with God. This is why we pray and have Masses offered for those in purgatory as God allows us to help them in this way.

Of Hell we cannot say who will be there, but we understand it to be a state where individuals have used their God-given freedom to reject God and His Will. God wants us more than anything to be with Him in Heaven, but He will leave us free to accept or reject His offer.

Of Heaven we try to use pictures and stories to express what it will be like. Saint Paul speaks of “those things that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

I remember after my Mother’s death my brother John was spending a period of quietness at Mount St. Bernard’s Abbey. Walking in the gardens he came across a monk digging the soil and John spoke to him about Mum’s death. The monk continued digging and then looking up at my brother he said “**She wouldn’t want to change places!**”

When we get a glimpse of the glory of God, His beauty, His Mercy and Love, we become totally consumed by the One who is our Maker, our Lover and our Keeper.”

In today’s Gospel Our Lord urges us to persevere amid all the hardships and difficulties of life and asks us not to be frightened, **because even the hairs of our head are counted.**

When young men were emigrating from Europe to America they would often “**earn their passage**” on the ships sailing to the new world. Unable to afford the passage these men and women would earn their passage by working hard for the duration of the journey. They did so because of the exciting prospect of reaching a country of opportunities, of adventure and of freedom.

Our lord asks of us that we would earn our passage to a land of freedom and glory, of unending happiness, a time and place when all sad things will come untrue.

Let us help one another to reach this promised land, our true home in Heaven.

Let us take to heart the words of today’s collect:

“Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to You, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good.”