

**FATHER MARK SCHULTE**  
**HOMILY**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME (A)**  
**FEBRUARY 1, 2026**

**“Remnant and Refuge”**

My Brothers and Sisters, at various times throughout the History of Israel, God’s people would fall away from authentic worship of God and then fall back into their old ways of pagan worship of false gods. We hear about one such incident in our first reading taken from the prophet Zephania (Zeph 2:3, 3:12-13). In order to wake up His people, and make them aware of what they had done, God would send chastisement down upon them. Over time God will relent of His chastisement, have mercy on His people, and bring about a period of peace.

In the process of this chastisement many people will lose their lives. However, ultimately God will spare a number of His people, He said “I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who will take refuge in the Name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel, they shall do no wrong and speak no lies” (Zeph 3-13) (CCC 711).

Thus, we see how God will provide a refuge for His people as protection from His blazing wrath. After the chastisement, this remnant (small group) will emerge to carry on and do the will of God. Through chastisement, God cleansed His people down to where there was only a small group. We hear something similar in the Book of Revelation where only 144,000 had God’s name written on their foreheads (Rev 14:1-5). These represent the remnant faithful that will follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Coming back to this concept of a refuge. A refuge is generally speaking a place of safety or security. It can be a physical place of safety or a spiritual one. A true refuge is a place designated by God, not necessarily a place chosen by man. Ultimately, we seek our place of refuge in God. The Catholic Church established by Jesus is the new people of God. It is the New Israel (CCC 877). The Church can often look back on the old Israel and see images of itself, moments of faithfulness to God and moments of unfaithfulness. As God chastised the old Israel from time to time for its idol worship, He can certainly do the same to His Church when she wanders off the true path and makes for herself new gods, which she puts more trust in than God Himself, such as entertainment, technology, and false doctrines and so on (Prov 3:5-6).

This chastisement will indeed happen sometime in the future. Maybe sooner, maybe later. But it will happen. When it happens what or who will be your place of refuge? Will you indeed be among that small remnant people that God will spare after the great chastisement? The passage tells us that the remnant of Israel took refuge in the name of the Lord. In other words, they put their faith in God’s protective care.

Jesus has also given us His Mother, the Virgin Mary, to be a refuge as well. In the Litany of the Virgin Mary, it tells us that she is the “refuge of sinners.” And so, we have God and the Blessed Virgin Mary as our spiritual refuge.

During the time of the future chastisement God will provide physical refuges as well. Such as the homes of believers, certain parishes and even places within the natural world such as caves and other isolated locations.

When this occurs a small remnant of His people will remain. How can one be assured that they will be among that remnant? First, they must make a conscious decision to be that. Once that is done, they can begin by staying faithful to the commandments and the laws of God’s Church. But Jesus speaks of another way that is very much related. He speaks to the people on the mountain side in the form of the beatitudes. He said Blest are the poor in spirit; Blest are the lowly; Blest are the peace makers, and so on. The beatitudes are the way of Christian living that helps a person remain in the grace of God (Mt 5:1-12) (CCC 1716-1729).

Therefore, choose to be part of God’s remnant people. Enter into the refuge of God’s Holy Name and seek protection in the Blessed Virgin Mary, refuge of sinners.

Our world is in need of a deep cleansing. The Church is in need of a deep cleansing. God will chastise when the time is right, a time of His own choosing. In the meantime, we should choose to be among God’s remnant people and enter into His refuge. It is the only place that provides sure safety, both physical and spiritual.

NOTE: CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church