

SERMON – 33rd SUNDAY OF THE YEAR.

My friends in our parish and Church we are entering into a particularly rich time of the year, our liturgical year is drawing to a close, next Sunday, the last Sunday, the great Feast of Christ the King, when we also celebrate the role of young people. We of course look forward to the season of Advent, and the new Church year, now only two weeks away. Today, has also in recent years, been declared by to be the Annual World day of the Poor. This is not just to be about praying for the poor or collecting money for the poor, but to remind us of our obligation to serve the needs of the poor in our world, to challenge the causes of poverty in our world.

Pope Leo XIV has declared Sunday 16 November 2025 to be the ninth World Day of the Poor, with the theme of “You are my hope ” The theme is taken from the Psalmist's cry “You, O Lord, are my hope” (Ps 71:5). In his message for this World Day of the Poor, the Holy Father urges us to recognise those experiencing poverty as “witnesses to a strong and steadfast hope, precisely because they embody it in the midst of uncertainty, poverty, instability and marginalisation” **The poor are not a distraction for the Church, but our beloved brothers and sisters, for by their lives, their words and their wisdom, they put us in contact with the truth of the Gospel.** In his message Pope Leo writes that the structural causes of poverty must be addressed and eliminated. “Helping the poor is a matter of justice before a question of charity” insists the Holy Father, quoting St Augustine, who observed: “You give bread to a hungry person; but it would be better if none were hungry, so that you would have no need to give it away.” In the meantime, the Pope urges us all to “offer new signs of hope” that will bear witness to Christian charity, which is the “is the greatest social commandment.” He draws attention to the many “quiet signs of hope” - in care homes, community centres, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and that often go unnoticed.

Also a week on Wednesday, the 23rd, we will be marking Red Wednesday, which is a worldwide day of prayer for the persecuted Church, it will be a ecumenical service, and we will be joined by members of the other Abergavenny churches. You can also find at the back of Church lots of Advent booklets, with daily prayers and readings for the Advent season, they are all free, for adults and kids, please take some and make use of in the Advent season.

Also as we approach the great season of Advent, now only two weeks away, the Sunday mass readings also focus our minds in the same direction, for in these last Sundays of the church year, our readings begin to talk about the last days, the day of judgement and the next life. This is because the season of advent has this theme, advent isn't just about remembering the first coming of Jesus when he was born as a human child, but also his promise that one day he would return in glory, what we call his 2nd coming, when he will judge the living and the dead, and when all creation will be made new, a new heaven and a new earth. The readings we have just heard guide our thoughts in this direction. The readings though can be rather hard to listen to, because they can be very dramatic and in scripture the descriptions of the last days are very violent and can be very frightening. We heard from the prophet Malachi in our 1st reading of this last day, when the evil doers would be punished, or burnt up as he says and the righteous will be rewarded. And then in our Gospel reading Jesus himself speaking, as recorded in St. Luke's gospel. Jesus speaks of the last days, of his return in glory, and how it will be accompanied by all kinds of dramatic and violent events- earthquakes and floods etc. He tells them that those days will involve terrible persecutions of the faithful, of how their faith will be put to the test, and how they must persevere and show endurance. He also tells them that many will come saying they know when that day is, or that they are Jesus returned, but he tells them not to listen to them, many false prophets and teachers in other words. He also

though mixes in with all this some very direct prophecies, he talks about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, of how one day, despite its majesty and beauty it would be destroyed; an event which did take place about 40 years later, when after a Jewish revolt, the temple and the whole city and whole nation was destroyed. Perhaps these events were in St. Lukes mind when he recorded these words of Jesus, he would have written his gospel after those events took place.

But for us the important thing is this belief that one day Jesus will return, the last day, the day of judgement, and even if that can be a frightening thought, it is also a great comfort to know that the fate of this worlds hands is not in the hands of sinful and violent men, but in Gods hands. One day all the suffering that men and women have imposed on others will come to an end, there will be a new kingdom, a kingdom of peace and justice. What we must do is persevere and show endurance in the midst of all the pain and horrors of this world, and not to despair or loose hope. We remind ourselves that death is not the end of us, or the end of our loved ones, we find hope in the churches teaching of the resurrection of the dead, that what happened to Jesus, his bodily resurrection will also happen to us and our loved ones on that last day, the day of judgement. Our faith gives us this wonderful hope, a hope that should transform our lives, should inspire us in the way we lead our lives, that we should never despair or give up or loose hope in the face of illness or tragedy. Amen.