

Homily for the Thirty-Third Sunday Year C

During World War II, a pilot named *William Ash* was shot down and sent to a Prisoner of War (POW) camp. This place was a living hell. After months of agony, he managed to escape and was sheltered by nuns. However, in a feverish delirium, he wandered straight into a Gestapo headquarters. There, he was brutally tortured, skinned, soaked in brine, and his fingernails were pulled out. Yet, despite the unimaginable suffering, he never revealed the identities of the nuns who had sheltered him. He knew that doing so would endanger their lives. These are true stories of people who endured to the very end.

As we approach the end of the liturgical year, our readings are eschatological and look like gloom and doom. They remind us of the “*end of things*.”

We heard the first reading from the book of the Prophet of Malachi. *Malachi*” means “*my messenger*”. The book was written after the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon, around 450–430 BC. During this time, the Temple had been rebuilt, but the people were spiritually lazy, discouraged, and disappointed that God’s promises did not seem to be fulfilled.

After the return from exile, People expected a *glorious restoration* of Israel. Instead, they faced poverty, weak leadership, and foreign domination. The priests had grown lax in worship. Many Israelites doubted whether serving God even mattered, because the wicked seemed to prosper.

It is during this time, the Prophet Malachi confronts this spiritual apathy that God will indeed act, the “*Day of the Lord*” is coming, when the wicked will be judged and the faithful will be healed and blessed. The Church uses this reading at the end of the liturgical year to emphasize God’s final justice and to encourage believers to remain steadfast in faith and hope.

Today’s Gospel begins with Jesus speaking about the *destruction of the Temple and the trials that will come*. This Gospel takes place during Jesus’ final days in Jerusalem, just before His Passion. The disciples and people admire the beauty of the Temple, which was the pride of the Jewish people and considered the center of God’s presence. The Temple in Jerusalem was the symbol of Jewish religion and the only center for Israel’s common worship and sacrifices. Weekly Sabbath prayers and the teaching of the Law were conducted in local synagogues.

Let me give a brief history about the destruction of the temple to understand the gospel. King Solomon built the first Temple on *Mount Moriah* in 966 BC to replace the tabernacle that had been Israel’s portable place of worship; I Kgs 5, gives a detailed description of that Temple’s solemn blessing. That Temple area covered some 35 acres.

After 379 years, the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar destroyed that Temple in 587 BC and took all the healthy Jews as slaves. On their return from exile, after some 70 years of Babylonian exile, the Jews rebuilt the Temple in 515 BC under the leadership of Zerubbabel (who was of the House of David).

Next, that rebuilt Temple was damaged, plundered, and desecrated by Greek conqueror Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BC, and stripped of everything of value. That Temple was cleansed and restored by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 B.C. But it was plundered and damaged again, first by Roman generals Pompey in 63 BC and then by Crassus in 54 BC.

King Herod the Great began to renovate it in 20 BC. Since Herod's Temple was constructed over the foundation of the temple built under Zerubbabel in 515 BC (though greatly expanded), it is known by Jews today as the Second Temple.

Jesus shocks them by predicting its destruction, something unimaginable to them but fulfilled later in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

Jesus uses this moment to teach about the trials that will come, persecution, betrayal, turmoil, and confusion. He is not giving a timetable for the end but preparing His followers to remain faithful when difficulties arise. He assures them that He Himself will be with them, giving wisdom and courage, and promises that perseverance, trusting in Him despite hardship will lead to true life.

Jesus says, ***“Do not be terrified, By your endurance you will save your souls.”*** This is the heart of the Gospel today.

We all go through our own “end times”. *When relationships break down , when health collapses, when our plans fall apart, when the future looks uncertain.* In those moments, Jesus invites us not to fear, but to trust. He promises that even in trials, He will be with us, giving us wisdom, strength, and courage.

What matters is not avoiding difficulties but *remaining faithful*. Endurance is not simply “holding on”; it is holding on to Him. **A young boy once asked his father during a storm, “Why aren’t you afraid?” The father replied, “Because I’m holding your hand and God is holding mine.”**

That is the message of today’s Gospel. Life may shake, but God holds us steady. Today, Jesus does not promise a life free of trials, but He does promise His presence, His strength, and His victory. So let us stand firm, persevere in faith, Stay faithful, stay calm and trust Him. May God bless all of us. Amen.