

2018 THIRTY THIRD SUNDAY

Yesterday morning I had the great privilege of baptizing the twin sons of Stephen and Aimee Ostler. The little boys, Finn and Thomas, melt the hearts of all who see them. How could you not love such beautiful little babies? And as I baptized them I prayed that both boys would come to embrace Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and would lead lives of happiness and fulfillment.

Two months ago a man, who is a spiritual leader of many in the Gisborne community- a man I respect very much- got me really thinking. He told the Interfaith Group that I am a part of that he does not pray for peace in the World. Rather he believes that we are now in the end-times- that the world is hurtling to its oblivion and that in the very near future the Son of Man would soon be arriving as Judge signaling the end of Time. Before this happens he believes that there will be a time of terrible catastrophes. So why pray for peace? It is all part of God's plan.

If I believed what the man said, it would certainly have cast a dark shadow on the Baptisms of Finn and Thomas. What future have the little boys got?

I can't say the man is definitely wrong because it is a clear teaching in today's Gospel that the World will come to an end. But the man is quite wrong in being so certain that the end of the world is close. No one has such knowledge.

God only reveals to us what God knows is for our good. Knowledge which would harm us will remain secret.

One such thing is the time of the Last Day. If, for example, we knew that the Last Day was to be on December 31st, 2018, there would be chaos in the world. Who would care about climate change? Who would care about law? There would be panic and total mayhem.

God is good to withhold such knowledge from us. In fact even Jesus, when He was alive on Earth, did not know when the Last Day would be. He sensed, incorrectly, that it could be soon after His death; but admitted that He really didn't know. In coming on Earth as a human person He had emptied Himself of knowledge which only God knows. As He said in today's Gospel: "But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son. No one but the Father."

God is the Creator. He is all-knowing. We are but Creations. Our knowledge is limited.

From the time of Adam and Eve, humans have constantly rebelled against our status as creations. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit believing that in so doing they would become equal to God and would be no longer subservient to God. The first sin was an act of rebellion against our status as creations.

Last week I took an hour off to go to the top of Hospital Hill to sit on a bench in the forest glade there- to just absorb the beauty of the place. The trees were redolent with new life after the bareness of winter. The birds were chirping cheekily and my heart soared in the presence of such exquisite beauty. I understood in the depths of my soul that God made this beauty for our delight. And I worshipped the Creator.

It is not for us to know the time of the end of the world. Rather it is for us to delight in our world and to give God thanks for it.

Yes, given the power of nuclear weapons to destroy everything living, we have the right of be a little fearful.

But we are never alone. Jesus has won the victory over sin and death. And time after time throughout history God has responded when it seemed as if the end of the World was inevitable to empower inspiring people to rise above their human weakness and to lead people back to thoughts of peace and reconciliation.

Last week I gave God thanks for the courage of the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, in challenging the warmongers of Russia and the US to mend their arrogance, and to seek the path of reconciliation.

Today's Readings from the prophet Daniel and the Gospel of Mark were written in times of turmoil and distress. In both cases it was felt that the World was ending.

Their message is identical: Be people of hope. God is with us and God will triumph on our behalf. And as we look back that is exactly what happened - Where is Antiochus Epiphanes, the all-conquering Greek tyrant, now? Where is the Roman General Titus now and his fearsome Roman empire? They believed themselves to be above God but they are now just dust and their empires simply bad memories. God is supreme. God is to be adored and God will not allow His beautiful creation to subside under the seas

Evil and good coexist in our world; but it will not be forever. The sands are passing through the hourglass. Time will end. And then good and evil will be separated- once and for all. On the Cross Jesus won the ultimate victory over death and evil and on the Last Day evil will be wiped out forever.

This truth gives us a great hope. Christ is King of the Universe. All reign will be forever.

It is this great belief that we will celebrate next week- the Feast of Christ the King. Alleluia!!