

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, November 13, 2022
33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle C

Today's gospel passage does not sound like Good News. In fact, it is kind of scary and seems to be filled with gloom and doom. The only encouraging words are found at the very end of the gospel when Jesus says, "By your perseverance, you will secure your lives."

Jesus is warning us that in our lifetimes, we will be living in some troubled and difficult times. According to Fr. George Rink, in his *Homilies from the Heart*, the evils that will come upon the world are of two kinds – The first evil is linked to nature, such as earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, plagues or tropical storms. A second evil comes from the sinful designs of people, such as leaders of countries seeking more power through violence and war and leaders who trample on human rights. When these things happen, Jesus tells us not to lose faith because God is still there with us to help and sustain us.

The bad news we see on TV, print and social media can often be devastating – the violence, the injustice, the terrible crimes, the wars and the threats of terrorist attacks. But we have to put them in the right perspective: These too will pass away.

We have to ask ourselves the question: What is it in this world that is truly enduring, truly worthwhile and important and will last forever? In today's gospel, the disciples thought that the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem would last forever. It was one of the great wonders of the world, "adorned with costly stones and votive offerings." So, the disciples are shocked to hear Jesus say to them, "All that you see here, the days will come when there will not be left one stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down." That prediction came true some 40 years later when this magnificent temple was totally destroyed by the Roman Empire and some 200 years later, the Roman Empire itself no longer existed!

The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Why? Because it was just a material thing. All material things in this world will eventually be destroyed. They cannot endure. What will endure in this life are the spiritual realities: of care and concern, of mercy and compassion, of charity and generosity, of forgiveness and reconciliation, of family and friendship. We can add to this list: smile and laughter, happiness and joy.

We humans can build a magnificent edifice, an awesome structure, a spectacular machine, a business empire, or a political dynasty. But none of these will endure and last forever. So why waste our time and energy building things that will not last?

Instead, we need to build a home of loving family, a place of brothers and sisters loving one another, a community of friends and companions, a world of justice, peace and love – knowing that these are the fruits that will endure and last forever.

Actor Christopher Reeve, who played the role of Superman, had everything: wealth, fame, fabulous health. He was one of the most handsome, physically-fit men in Hollywood. Then he fell from a horse. And suddenly he was a quadriplegic. When he awoke from his accident, his first thought was that maybe he should go ahead and die. He wanted to commit suicide. But one thing stopped him and gave him the will to live. His wife, Dana, spoke to him firmly, yet gently:

“I am only going to say this once,” she said. “I will support whatever you want to do, because this is your life and your decision. But I want you to know that I’ll be with you for the long haul, no matter what. You’re still you, and I love you.”

Those words gave Christopher Reeve the strength to go on. So, when we hear about tragedies or experience tragedies in our own lives or when we read about the end times – the destruction of the world, the second coming of Christ – it is comforting to know that God’s unconditional love is saying to us, “Do not be afraid and do not worry. I will be with you over the long haul, no matter what!” Then God will also say to us, “You are still you, and I will always love you.”