

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)  
(Malachy 3:19-20 / Luke 21:5-19)  
13.11.2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

**“Your endurance will win you your lives”**. These last words of today’s gospel passage provide the key we need if we are to understand Jesus’ discourse on “the End of Time”.

The discourse we have just heard does not make for an easy read. It speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, and of the end of world history. Between these two events, there will be an uncertain period of time. We are in this “in-between” time. The text evokes many signs which will occur during this “in-between” time: wars, revolutions, earthquakes, plagues and famines, betrayals, and even persecutions and imprisonments for those who believe in Jesus. We might say that a lot of these events are happening in the world and in our lives today. But we have to be careful not to try to establish a precise correspondence between the signs of which the gospel speaks and what is happening today. Jesus himself was not really interested in the detail of these signs. His main concern was to help those who experience all these trials not to fall into the temptation to give up the faith. In the midst of all the difficult situations that we have to face, Jesus shows us the way forward: **“Your endurance will win you your lives”**. It is your enduring fidelity to the Lord’s will and to your vocation in life that will win you your lives. This is precisely the path that Jesus followed here on earth: He remained faithful until the end to his mission which was to reveal the Father’s love for all people without exception. This resulted in Jesus meeting with persecution and even death. But on the third day, he rose from the dead. His endurance was rewarded. Thanks to Jesus’ enduring perseverance, life is shown to be victorious over death and our sins are forgiven.

Let us look at the Church all around us: there are very few young people in our liturgical gatherings. There are little or no vocations to priesthood, to religious and monastic life... What is the future for the Church? Perhaps the answer to this question is in Jesus’ words: **“Your endurance will win you your lives”**. We have to keep on believing in Christ and practising the gospel until the newness of the Lord makes a breach into our situation which seems to be hopeless. Most of the time, we think about the future with categories of the past. As it was, so it will be again and again. And this shapes our prayer life. But Jesus takes the opportunity of our hopelessness to open up new paths for us; to give us new perspectives; to lead us to think in ways we would have never thought of before.

Today, all our countries are experiencing great political instability; there is deep dissatisfaction and a real malaise. There is no confidence in our political institutions and in one another. There is no real leadership. Opposition and violence have taken the place of dialogue. Instead of working together, nations seem to prefer isolationism. Perhaps we are called to remember Jesus’ words: **“Your endurance will win you your lives”**. We have to remain faithful to our duty to love and respect one another, to live a life of service, solidarity and communion, integrating our legitimate differences. There is no doubt that, one day, new ways of living and working together will be given to us.

In ecumenism also, we may feel as if we are in an impasse. We can have the impression that we are stuck in the mud and getting nowhere. Perhaps we have to keep on praying with Jesus: "May all be one so that the world may believe" and new ways will open in front of us, new ways which we had not thought of before. Here too "**Our endurance will win us our lives**".

Our enduring perseverance as we make our way through dryness, sterility, oppositions and so many trials prepares the soil of our personal lives and of our communities to receive the seed of the newness of God. Let us keep in mind the resurrection of Jesus which followed his rejection, passion and death. The life of Jesus seemed to end in a failure, but then his resurrection came about and all was made new. Our endurance will bring something to birth, something new and unexpected and something beyond all our imagination. When we face a trial, we are often like those who prepare their own defence, forgetting that it is up to the Lord himself to put on our lips his own words. The Church's future and the world's future are in God's hands. We have just to wait for it not passively but actively and then be ready to welcome the future God has prepared for us.

**"Your endurance will win you your lives"**. Our enduring perseverance will win us our lives. This is something easily said, but this is not something which is just so easy to live day after day. Where can we find the strength we need for this? Let us not forget the promise of the Risen Lord: His promise to be with us until the end of time. The Lord walks by our side on the path of life, every day of our lives. The Lord lives within us. The Lord said to us in today's gospel passage: "Keep this carefully in mind: you are not to prepare your defence, because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict"... And again: "You will be hated by all men on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost". These words of the Lord are powerful, comforting and challenging words. We are not alone. Our loving God is always with us, ever ready to help us. If we persevere, walking humbly with our Lord, He will come to make all things new within us and among us, in his own time, in his own way.

To come back to our first reading, we have to fear the Lord every day of our lives, not with a cringing fear before a terrifying God, but an attitude of awe before the mystery of a loving God, an attitude of gratitude for God's unmerited love for us, an attitude of gratitude for the Lord's mercy.

Hope is not deceptive. Let us dare to hope against all hope. Our endurance in the faith will win us our lives.