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For Sunday, November 15, 2015

A Time Unsurpassed in Distress

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/111515.cfm>

Daniel 12:1-3

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32



BBC broadcasts from Burundi are horrific. Dead bodies in the streets. Killed execution style. President Pierre Nkurunziza is demanding that all citizens must surrender illegal firearms by the end of week or risk being "[dealt with as enemies of the nation.](#)"

"The crash of Metrojet Flight 9268 in Egypt's Sinai was most likely caused by a bomb placed by ISIS or an ISIS affiliate" is the [headline on Internet media.](#) There is now the fear that the terrorism of ISIS is not just to bring about a new Middle East state, but terrorism for the sake of terrorism internationally.

The *Daily Mail* on Sunday, November 8, [featured this headline:](#) "Further 'proof' Russian soldiers are now on the ground in Syria as US planes

intensify airstrikes against ISIS with 56 attacks in eight days."

The reading from the prophet Daniel says: "it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time." We here in the United States can sweep these terrors under the carpet of our *joie de vivre*, our prevailing optimism... unless and until we remember 9/11. Fear really impinged on our daily living then. In those days, with every low flying aircraft, we looked up with suspicious fear. Fear of terrorism knocked at our doors then. But now, it's an ocean away... or is it?

Jesus builds on the nightmare of Daniel. He paints pictures of horrendous events in nature: "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling."

As we approach the end of the liturgical year, our readings are of an apocalyptic struggle. That struggle is the final battle between good and evil. It will be universal in scope, reflecting back to the chaos at the beginning of creation. Another Big Bang? Daniel shares that “it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress.”

Interestingly, Mark’s Gospel reflects back to the beginning of this year. Last Advent, in his Gospel, Mark begins with warnings. Now is the time to prepare for what is to come! It’s not, “life as usual”! It’s the coming of the kingdom we are to be ready for... God breaking into human history. On that First Sunday of Advent, Jesus said, “Be watchful! Be alert! ... You do not know when the Lord of the house is coming... Watch!”

Now, at the end of the readings from Mark, that Advent reading is bookended by today’s Gospel. It’s the coming of the “Son of Man” that must be prepared for! A second coming! No longer is it an arrival into a very small backward nation in the Middle East, but he will “gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.” Do these words and these pictures bring fear to our hearts or do they fill us with hope? There is more to these images than being harbingers of horror.

Both Daniel and Jesus speak in positive images as well. We will be filled with hope if we follow Jesus’ directives. If we are prepared and watch! If our eyes and our lives are focused on the daily comings of the Lord, the in-breaking of God in our daily lives. Then we will be among the wise. We will “shine brightly” and be “like the stars forever”!

How does God break into our lives? Oh, aren’t we blind to many of God’s advances? The glorious slant of the morning sun painting the sky in delicate pastels. God is there. The beauty of a sleeping child. God is there. The delicious burst of flavor from an orange. God is there. The warm embrace from a loved one. Oh yes, God is there. The marvelous freedom we have. The miracle of our eyes and ears and hearts and minds! God comes to us in millions of ways every day, constantly surprising us with gifts more tiny and huge beyond our imagining. We don’t see “the Son of Man coming in the clouds’ with great power and glory” but if we can begin to see God in his many hidden ways, we will gain the wisdom to see him in his final coming. We will be ready.

Preparing for this final coming can greatly enrich life even now. When that apocalyptic struggle finally comes we can stand, not in fear, but in hope, because we have experienced the end result already in our lives. That end result is that good always triumphs! It may take a long time. We may experience many struggles. But—always—good will come out on top! This we believe! It is our faith in the paschal mystery. It does not end with death, but always, always blossoms into resurrection!

Every Sunday we profess our belief that good triumphs! We pray together with the universal church, “I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” With those words, we definitely are filled with hope and joy!

Patricia DeGroot

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
you made not only the stars of the heavens,

but you made the seasons the earth.
In every autumn, there are endings and beginnings.
There is the end of vacations,
and the beginning of school.
Cool green leaves fall from their branches,
and become dappled yellows, bright oranges and deep reds.
Help me, when things end that I wish had continued,
to see that in you, there are no real endings.
In you, there are only changes, and new beginnings.
Give me the grace to know,
that even death itself is not the end,
but only a change
from one beautiful thing into another.
Amen.

—*Prayer for Autumn*, © Liturgical Publications Inc.

NOTICES

MCA KIDS CHRISTMAS ARTWORK CONTEST

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith will select twenty-four winners in the 2015–2016 Missionary Childhood Association Christmas Artwork Contest; their artwork will be available as e-greetings on its website for children (www.MCAKids.org) and will be displayed at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, during Advent 2016 and through that Christmas season. The official entry form for this year's contest can be downloaded here: <http://onefamilyinmission.org/hcakids/pdf/entryform.pdf>. Deadline is January 31, 2016.

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Many dioceses will take up the collection for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development the weekend of November 22, 2015. You'll find resources for promoting this collection at: <http://usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/collection/collection-resources.cfm>.

CATHOLICTECHTALK.COM

CatholicTechTalk.com is an online community for Catholics passionate about technology and social media. This includes priests, laity, bloggers, writers, technologists, website developers, graphic designers, and all who wish to use technology more effectively in their ministry and personal life. The blog is a group effort by Catholic technology enthusiasts working to fulfill its mission to "make the name of Jesus Christ known and loved" through the use of technology and social media.

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