



**November 14, 2021**

## **Thirty Third Sunday of Ordinary Time**

*"Learn a lesson from the fig tree..." Mark 13:28*

Dear Friends;

On September 10, 2021, Pope Francis, Justin Welby the Archbishop of Canterbury (leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion), and the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (leader of Orthodox Christianity) issued a joint statement calling on people of all faiths to take action to halt the devastating effects of climate change. They said,

*"The current climate crisis speaks volumes about who we are and how we treat God's creation. We stand before a harsh justice: biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions, since we have greedily consumed more of the earth's resources than the planet can endure. But we also face a profound injustice: the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the least responsible for causing them."*

This is an apocalyptic warning for those who are invested in the continued abuse of the planet and hope for those who want to save the earth.

The point of apocalyptic writing and literature is not doom and destruction. It arises out of distress that comes from pain, suffering and dying. The distress is not the important thing. The pain is not the end of the story. Dying is not the point. The point is to give us hope and to move us to action.

Today's readings from the Prophet Daniel and our passage from Mark are apocalyptic. The author of Daniel is living through a time of great distress. A foreign power occupies Judah. The Greek rulers are trying to force the people into adapting Greek culture. (Just like our government's Indians Schools tried to force indigenous peoples to lose their culture) The evil King Antiochus Epiphanes is cruelly punishing those people of Judah who wish to keep their language and customs. Daniel warns of an even greater persecution. But he promises that those who are faithful will be triumphant. And he even makes the first and unambiguous statement of belief in the resurrection of the dead in the whole Old Testament. Despite the distress there is hope for a new reality.

From our passage from Mark, we see that Jesus expected everything he announced would happen within the lifetime of his hearers. Jesus died around the year 30 AD and indeed the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed around 70 AD. The political-religious institutions of Jesus' time came to an end at that moment. Out of that destruction new realities came into being, modern Rabbinical Judaism and a separate Christian identity were formed. Eventually over the next two centuries the forces that were unleashed by the Roman destruction of Jerusalem would change the Roman Empire itself.

Often times we are drawn to the idea of quick and dramatic change. If we look at history the dramatic moments are only highlighting processes that were already underway. Profound change is for the most part gradual and subtle. This is where Jesus turns our focus from dramatic destruction to the subtlety of nature. Look at the barren tree in winter. Jesus says keep looking and you will see—slow, gentle change. The dry dead leaves have fallen and blown away. Eventually the branches slowly change color and the buds appear and tiny leaves start to emerge. The point that Jesus is making is not to focus on this world as we know it. That world is dying. We need to look for the new life of the Kingdom as it gently appears. Look to the buds not the dead leaves on the ground.

This week as the climate change summit finished up we must look to the change that will usher in a reality that is kinder to creation, the poor, and all of God's creatures. We must replace the dominating, pillaging and destroying powers of empire which are destroying the planet. We look for the Reign of God—we see that everything that exists is sacred and reflects the Divine. If we are over invested in things as they are change will seem like apocalyptic disaster. But if we await the justice of God the coming change will come like springtime after a long dark winter.

Peace,

*Fr Ron*