

**1-page Summary of OT 33 [B] (Nov 18) homily on Mk 13:24-32 (L-18)**

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**Central theme:** Today's readings give us the assurance that our God will be with us all the days of our lives and that we will have the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst, guiding, protecting and strengthening us in spite of our necessary uncertainty concerning the end time when "*Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.*" Each year at this time, the Church asks us to consider the "last things" – Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell – as happening to ourselves.

**Scripture lessons summarized:** The readings invite us to focus our attention on the threefold coming of Jesus: 1) His first coming according to the flesh, as Redeemer. 2) His second coming, either at our death, or at the end of time and the world, which will bring our salvation to completion. 3) His coming into our lives each time we step forward in genuine Christian living. The first reading, taken from the prophet Daniel (167 BC), was originally given to comfort and give hope to the Jewish people persecuted by a cruel pagan king. It advises us to live wisely and justly in the present time, instead of worrying about the unknown future. The author of the Hebrews in the second reading, challenges us to look to the future with hope and serenity because Jesus, who sits forever at God's right hand, is the mediator who has secured the forgiveness of our sins and our sanctification through his sacrifice on the cross. Today's Gospel, taken from Mark (AD 69), offered hope to early Christians persecuted by the Roman Emperor Nero, reminding them of Jesus' words about his glorious return to earth with great power and glory as Judge to gather and reward his elect. Daniel and Mark continue to remind us that God will ensure that the righteous will survive the ordeal and will find a place with Him. Through the parable of the fig tree, Jesus warns us all to read the "*signs of the*

*time,*” reminding us that we must be ever prepared to give an account of our lives to Jesus when he comes in glory as our Judge, because we cannot know “*either the day or the hour*” of his *Second Coming*.

**Life messages:** 1) Let us recognize the “second coming” of Jesus in our daily lives through everyday occurrences, always remembering that Jesus comes without warning. But let us not get frightened at the thought of Christ’s *Second Coming* because he is with us every day in the Holy Eucharist, in the Holy Bible and in our worshipping communities. We will be able to welcome him in his Second Coming as long as we faithfully do the will of God daily by serving our brothers and sisters, by recognizing Christ’s presence in them, and by being reconciled with God and with our brothers and sisters every day.

2) We need to “learn the lesson from the fig tree.” This means that we are to watch and wait in a state of readiness. Instead of worrying about the *end time* events, we are asked to live every day of our lives loving God living in others, by our committed service to them with sacrificial *agape* love.

**OT XXXIII [B] (Nov 18) SUNDAY: Dn 12:1-3; Heb 10:11-14, 18; Mk 13:24-32**

**Homily starter anecdotes #1: Scientists on the end of the world:** Scientists have fueled public anxiety by citing a series of possible ways in which the world could come to an end, e.g. (a) Sucked into a black hole. A large dead star which has collapsed and has become so incredibly dense that even light cannot escape it, a “black hole” is thought to be a fatal attraction for any nearby matter; (b) Climate change. Another ice age or glacial period is expected in 2,000--10,000 years; if and when it occurs, over eight billion people will try to survive on 30% less land mass; (c) The Greenhouse Effect. A predicted temperature increase of 6° F is expected by the year 2030; if this occurs, polar regions will thaw, ocean levels will rise and vast areas of earth will be flooded; (d)

Collision. Earth may be hit by a meteorite, asteroid or comet; (e) Cosmic Rays. Earth's magnetic field is waning at present, making it susceptible to the rays of an exploding supernova and/or solar flares; (f) Nuclear War and its Aftermath. A familiar and frightening scenario: a possible nuclear war could wipe out up to 90% of the U.S. population and 50% of that of Russia; (g) The Death of the Sun. Considered as the ultimate disaster, the eventual cooling of the sun will occur only after an intense period of heating up which will boil away earth's oceans and bake its crust unto lifelessness. [Patricia Datchuck Sánchez, *Celebration*.] But Today's readings give us the assurance that our God will be with us all the days of our lives and that we will have the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst guiding, protecting and strengthening us in spite of our necessary human uncertainty concerning the end time when "Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." So, the Church advises us to entrust the unknown and unknowable future to God's caring and capable hands.

**# 2: \$ 57, 000 for Jesus' shopping in his second coming:** In 1981, a man left \$57,000 in his will to Jesus. It was for His own use when He returned at the Second Coming. The money was to be invested at the highest interest in the meantime. Does anyone really think that Jesus will be shopping at a posh department store for a new seamless robe and sandals upon His return? Does anyone feel money is what He shall require from us at the Parousia? Is this what the Nazarene is all about? Christ is more interested in the way we conduct our lives this moment rather than tomorrow. He is more eager to see us improve life for others today than He is to remove us from it. Andrew Greeley has some wise thoughts on this point. The Second Coming, the New Age, the New Epoch, he says, can and should be happening throughout this day and week. I saw the Second Coming at a

Soup Kitchen where I worked. A white woman volunteer gave a black man soup, pasta, and coffee. As he was leaving, he thanked her. Then she noticed the bad condition of his shoes. She told him to wait. From the clothing closet, she brought several pair. The woman got down on her knees and fitted each pair. Finally, she found his fit. In this forty-minute encounter, Jesus in His Second Coming was present. I was watching Him washing His apostles' feet all over again. I witnessed the New Age today at a fast-food restaurant. A busload of children treated their waitress with kindness. "Please" and "thank you" were more plentiful than hamburgers and cokes. They cleaned their table. They left a generous tip and a happy waitress. There was no doubt but that the Lord was present. I see the New Epoch every time one of you gives me \$100 and asks me to give it to a family having a difficult time. If one looks sharp enough, you can see a smile on Christ's face. I observed the New Order yesterday. I was lost and could not find the correct road. I asked directions of a young man. Though he was in as much a hurry as I, he U-turned and told me to follow him for several miles. Then he put my car on the correct road. Can you not hear Jesus applaud as I tell you this story? I heard of the Second Coming yesterday. A mother told me of her return from a long journey. On her kitchen table, she found a dozen carnations waiting to greet her. The benefactor was her teen son. That day she saw Christ in her boy. I saw the New Epoch last week. A priest had heard that hostiles in a parish were gleefully giving another priest, whom he hardly knew, a hard time. He phoned. "May I buy you a good lunch?" The trip cost him not only the restaurant bill but also a round trip of 140 miles, and over half a tank of gas. Was not the Nazarene riding with him that day? You, I am sure, can fill in the blanks and tell me of the times when you saw the Second Coming this past week. And hopefully you were the cause of it. (Fr. James Gilhooley)

23 additional anecdotes are uploaded in my website <http://frtonyshomilies.com/>

**Introduction:** Today's readings give us the assurance that our God will be with us all the days of our lives and that we will have the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst guiding, protecting and strengthening us in spite of our necessary human uncertainty concerning the endtime when "Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." Next Sunday is the Thirty-fourth and last Sunday in our liturgical year when we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, and the following Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent season with a new Liturgical Cycle. Each year at this time, the Church asks us to mediate on the "last things" - Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell -- as they apply to us. The readings invite us to focus our attention on the threefold coming of Jesus: 1) His first coming according to the flesh, as Redeemer. 2) His second coming, either at our death, or at the end of time and the world, which will bring our salvation to completion. 3) His coming into our lives each time we step forward in genuine Christian living. The first reading with its vision of the archangel Michael, taken from the prophet Daniel (167 BC), was originally given to comfort and give hope to the Jewish people, persecuted by a cruel pagan king. The Responsorial Psalm (Ps 16) reminds each of us that God Himself is "my allotted portion and my cup," and that "with Him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed." In the second reading, the author of the letter to the Hebrews consoles believers suffering from "*endtime phobia*" with the knowledge that Jesus, who sits forever at God's right hand, is our mediator. By his sacrificial death, Jesus forgave our sins and sanctified us. Today's Gospel, taken from Mark (AD 69), offered hope to early Christians persecuted by the Roman Emperor Nero, reminding them of Jesus' words about his glorious return to earth with great power

and glory as Judge in order to gather and reward his elect. Though Daniel and Mark describe frightful scenes, their accounts also remind their audience that God will ensure that the righteous will survive the ordeal and will find a place with Him. Through the parable of the fig tree, Jesus warns us all to read the "*signs of the time,*" and reminds us that we must be ever prepared to give an account of our lives to Jesus our Judge, because we cannot know "*either the day or the hour*" of our own death or of his *second coming*.

**The first reading Dn 12:1-3, explained:** This first reading taken from the prophet Daniel (167 BC), originally given to comfort and give hope to the Jewish people being persecuted by a cruel pagan king, advises us to live wisely and justly in the present time instead of worrying about the unknown future. In the second century BC, the Jews were conquered by the Greeks. The Greek king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, tried to Hellenize the Jews by imposing Greek norms on them, by forbidding them to practice circumcision, by stripping the Temple of its valuables, by burning the Torah scrolls, by introducing the worship of Greek gods to the Jews and by forcing the Jews to join in the worship of these pagan gods. In this frightening and dangerous time, the Lord God's prophetic message to Israel through Daniel addressed the needs of the suffering Jewish people, bolstering their morale and promising them the sure and definite intervention of Yahweh, their God of power and glory, even if they faced persecutions and hardship for a short term. Hence, they believed that Yahweh was on the verge of stepping into the world and definitively changing everything (Dan 12:1-3). This short passage also describes the "*great tribulation,*" the "*resurrection of the dead*" and the Divine Judgment with its rewards for the wise and righteous and its punishments for the foolish and wicked. Thus, today's selection from Daniel introduces the belief in the

*resurrection of the dead* and makes the first mention in the Bible of “*everlasting life*,” while such a doctrine was almost unprecedented among Jews even in the second century BC.

**Second Reading, Hebrews 10:11-14, 18, explained:** This reading challenges us to look to the future with hope and serenity because Jesus, who sits forever at God’s right hand, is the mediator who secured the forgiveness of our sins and our sanctification through his sacrifice on the cross. The letter to the Hebrews was written for Jewish converts to Christ, in part to help them cope with the loss of the comforts they had enjoyed within the institutions of Judaism and from which they had been excluded by their conversion. The author's intent was to show that Jesus himself had replaced those old institutions and exceeded them. In today's passage, the institutions in question are *priesthood* and *sacrifices*. The author asserts that the old, repetitious sacrifices were futile, while the one sacrifice of Jesus makes us perfect forever and wins the forgiveness of sin, rendering further sacrifice unnecessary. Through Jesus’ saving gift of himself, perfect praise has been offered to God, sin and guilt, have been expiated, and absolute, intimate union has been achieved. Jesus continues his priestly work in Heaven by his intercession for us in the presence of God, the Father. Furthermore, Jesus, the new and the only High Priest, has a seat at God's right hand, closer than any other priest has ever come to Him. For Jesus’ sacrifice made possible the forgiveness of sins and the formation of a new relationship between God and humankind.

**Gospel exegesis: The context:** Mark's Gospel, written some 40 years after Jesus' death, is the simplest, shortest, and oldest of the four Gospels. This week's Gospel text is taken from the thirteenth chapter of Mark, which, together with Matthew 24 and Luke 21, is often called the "Little Apocalypse." *Apocalypse* literally means

*unveiling*. The whole of Mark's thirteenth chapter is full of apocalyptic imagery and predictions borrowed from the Old Testament. Verses 24-27 are taken from images appearing in the prophecies of Joel (2:10), Isaiah (13:10; 34:4), Daniel (7:13), Deuteronomy (30:3), and Zechariah (2:10). Jesus skillfully weaves all these various strands into one powerful vision. The Gospel of Mark was written in the year 69 AD, just one year before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, at a time when the Romans were suppressing Jewish protests and persecuting Christians. Many Christians began wondering why Jesus did not return as he had promised. Some even wondered whether he had really been the promised Messiah. Hence, Mark tried to strengthen their faith by quoting Jesus' predictions of the coming persecution of the faithful (13:9-13), the destruction of Jerusalem (13:2, 7-9, 14-20), the rise of the Anti-Christ (13:5-6, 21-23), the end of the world, and Christ's Second Coming (13:24-26). Mark also offered hope to a persecuted community by reminding the people of Jesus' promise that wars, natural disasters and betrayal by family members would be overcome when the Son of Man returned to earth to gather in his loved ones.

**The glorious coming of the Son of Man:** In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks about the displacement of celestial bodies at the end of the world, followed by the appearance of the Son of Man in glory to establish the Reign of God. The coming of the Son of Man, "*in clouds with great power and glory*," echoes a passage in Daniel. Cosmic disturbances of the sun, moon and stars are images traditionally associated with the manifestations of God's judgment on Israel. In the Creed we recite at Mass, we proclaim that Jesus "will come again to judge the living and the dead." The New Testament writers used the Greek word *Parousia* which means the arrival and presence of a king, to describe this second coming of Jesus. Although no time-frame is given in the Gospels

for the period between the destruction of Jerusalem and the final coming of Jesus as King and Lord of all, the early Christians believed that Jesus would come in their lifetime, based on their understanding of Jesus' promise in Mark, "*this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.*"

**Parable of the fig tree and warning for watchfulness:** Jesus gives a warning lesson from the fig tree, using stock prophetic expressions well known to his listeners (Ezra 9:3; 13:1; Baruch 27:5-13; Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10, 3:15; Ezekiel 32: 7, 8; Isaiah 27:13, 35; Micah 7:12; Zechariah 10:6-11). The fig tree sprouts its leaves in late spring heralding the summer season. The application of this image to the end of the world suggests that the end of the world will mean good times, or summer, for Jesus' disciples, because their God will be bringing things to a triumphant end, and His Truth, Love and Justice will prevail forever. But we must always be well prepared to face our judgment because we do not know the day nor the hour, either of the ending of the world or of our own call from this life. Hence, true disciples are to watch and wait in a state of readiness. Instead of worrying about the *endtime* events, we are asked to live every day of our lives in loving God in Himself and as living in others by our committed service. Thus, we will enter into a deeper relationship with God, which will continue when we pass through death into a different kind of life.

**Life messages:** 1) Let us recognize the "second coming" of Jesus in our daily lives. Today's Gospel reminds us of a "coming" of God which we tend to forget, namely, God's daily coming to us in the ordinary events of our lives. We must learn to recognize and welcome Him in these everyday occurrences - happy, encouraging, painful or disappointing - always remembering that He comes without warning. Let us remember that the Lord is present wherever people treat each other with gentleness,

generosity, and thoughtfulness. Hence, let us try to bring Jesus to earth, as St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) puts it: "by doing little things to others around us with great love."

2) Let us take heart and not be frightened: The end of the world should never be thought of as depressing, disheartening or frightening because we are in the hands of a good and loving God. Christ's second coming gives us the message that God is journeying with us in the trials and difficulties of life, and that His word is ever-present as a light of hope. He speaks to us through the Bible. We have the Eucharist as a sign that God is with us, in our midst. Holy Communion is our point of direct, personal contact with God. That is why the holy Mass is special: the more fully and frequently we participate in the Mass, the more deeply the Lord can come to us, and the more completely He can remain with us. Let no one frighten us with disturbing descriptions of the end of the world because "the end" is all about the birth of everyone and everything into eternity.

3) Are we ready to meet our Lord with a clear conscience? Suppose we were to learn today that we had just one year to live - that we would die on November 18, 2019. What changes would we make in our lives? How would we spend our time, talents, wealth? What changes would we make in our priorities? Would we be concerned about the petty quarrels and bickering of life? No! The next twelve months would be the best year of our lives because we would spend our time doing loving, holy and worthwhile things.

4) "Learn the lesson from the fig tree." Jesus tells us that our personal "endtime" is a prelude to eternal happiness. However, we are all so taken in by our secular culture's fascination and glamour that we are sometimes embarrassed or saddened by the signs of our own approaching end. We foolishly consider growing old as an evil thing, rather than as a warning from a

loving God to prepare to meet Him and to give an account of our lives. Our aches and pains and frequent "doctor's appointments" in our senior years should remind us of God's warning that we are growing unfit to live in this world, and that we have to get ready for another world of eternal happiness. Hence, let us take the spirit of the 27th Psalm: *"Wait for the Lord. Take courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord"* (v. 14).

## **JOKE OF THE WEEK**

#1: "You'll wish you were Jewish!!" A Protestant minister and a Catholic priest enjoyed teasing their Jewish rabbi friend, continually asking him when he was going to convert to their Faith. When the Holidays rolled around, the rabbi sent them a card with the following: "Season's Greetings! Roses are reddish, Violets are bluish; When the Messiah comes, you'll wish you were Jewish!!"

#2: Missed the "rapture" by a minute: A certain man, Herbert Washington by name, was so taken up by the nearness of Christ's second coming and "the rapture" that he became a pain in the neck to his coworkers. So his coworkers hatched a plan to pay him back in his own coin. One day, when Herbert went to the washroom, they laid their work clothes on their chairs and hid in the supply room. When Herbert came back from the washroom, he thought the rapture had taken place. The Muslim janitor, who was part of the joke, pretended to have witnessed everyone disappear and ran around the office feigning panic. Herbert fell to the ground clutching his heart and screaming, "I knew you'd forget me, Jesus! What did I do wrong?" He was rushed to a local hospital with what was diagnosed as a mild heart attack. (Fr. Munachi).

#3: The Second Coming. A Sunday school teacher asked his class, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the Church, would that get me into Heaven? "NO!"

the children all answered. "If I cleaned the Church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into Heaven?" Again, the answer was, "NO!" Again the teacher asked, "Well, then, if I were kind to animals and gave candy to all the children, and loved my wife, would that get me into Heaven?" Again, they all answered, "NO!" "Well then how can I get into Heaven?" A five-year-old boy shouted out, "YOU GOTTA BE DEAD!" Good insight for a five-year old!

#4: Somnambulist or Methodist? "Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake," Jesus commands. The signs-of-the-times are such that, clearly, this is no time for somnambulists. A somnambulist, as you know, is a person who walks in his sleep. On the eve of his wedding, a young man decided to confess all to his fiancée. He went to her and said, "My love, there is something I feel I must tell you before we are married; something you must know. It may make a difference in your feeling toward me. You see, I am a somnambulist." The young lady thought for a moment, then replied, "Oh that's all right. There's no problem. I was raised a Methodist. We can go to your Church one Sunday and to mine the next."