

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Nov 1st 2013

When times are tough, some individuals draw on the apocalyptic language of some of the Biblical books to give meaning to what they experience. Today's first reading is often used for such purposes because the text refers to global destruction and some of us, who experience difficulties, insecurities, and threats to their lives, conclude that this reading is now a reality: our world is coming to an end. But is this really implied by the Book of Revelation or do we misunderstand the apocalyptic language?

The apocalyptic language is a language of transformation and transformation can be painful. Our world needs to be transformed in order to match the God's Kingdom. References to destruction tell us that much of our world is contrary to God's command and Christ's Good News. Much of what we do needs to be transformed by the Sacred Scriptures. This is not easy, expects major changes from us as individuals and societies, makes us vulnerable, and exposes us to risks. However, as followers of Christ, we have been marked with the "seal of the living God," as the first reading says, we are among this "great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue." We are among those, who "have washed their robes ... in the Blood of the Lamb." Thus, nothing can harm us in difficult times, in times of transformation, as we try to change our society through the Good News.

The first reading also refers to us not as individuals but as a group, as the collective of followers of Christ. It is not about "me" or "you," it is about "us." In other words, we do not go through difficult times alone and by ourselves. We are a community and are expected to support each other as "children of God," as brothers and sisters, as the second reading says.

The first and second reading are quite general and do not specify what it means for Christ's followers, for the Church, to be part of this transformation process. However, the Sermon on the Mount in today's Gospel is very clear in identifying who will enter the Kingdom of God, who are those who transformed the world inspired by Christ's teaching.

As we read the Sermon on the Mount let us meditate over its relevance for us, the Church, who are called to change the world through Christ's teachings. Let us pray for our Christian communities, parishes, and the Church as a whole, to transform our society, our economic systems shaped by inequalities contrary to Christ's teaching, our political systems which often favor the elite and do not sufficiently protect those at the fringes of society who are God's priority. Let us pray for and recognize international relations which reflect global disparities in wealth and power, contradicting Christ's teaching on equality and equity.

As we endeavor to change the world, we do so knowing that God is on our side, that we are marked with the “seal of the living God,” and that ultimately we will “rejoice and be glad, for [our] reward will be great in heaven.” On this day, the Solemnity of All Saints, we remember those who transformed the world and who are now “rejoicing ... in heaven.” Their example inspires us and they accompany us through their prayer and intervention.

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