

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, November 13, 2022

## Do you REALLY want to know?

*Written by Fr. Mark Suslenko*

**Malachi 3:19-20a**

**2 Thessalonians 3:7-12**

**Luke 21:5-19**



We are hearing the word “Armageddon” tossed around the media and even out of the mouths of leaders on several occasions these days. While Armageddon has specific Biblical significance, it is a term that is loosely used to describe a cataclysmic battle signifying the end of the world. Between the Russian/Ukraine war and rising concerns with North Korea and China, one can easily wonder if world tensions are escalating to an alarming fever pitch and coming to a head. Political, religious and ideological disparities as well as many people giving voice to a general feeling of discontent with increased acts of violence also cause many to wonder. Does everything that is happening indicate that the present world, as we know it, is coming to an end?

Jesus told us that the world would one day come to an end. On this point he is very clear. He even goes on to describe some of what we will see in the [Gospel for this Sunday](#). He tells of wars and insurrections, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, of powerful earthquakes, famines and plagues, awesome sights, and mighty signs from the sky. Even the prophet Malachi, chastising people centuries before, warns of a purifying fire. These themes are evident in salvation history and must be acknowledged. It is certain that the world will one day come to an end and Christ will reign supreme. This is our faith.

Some people make it their personal ambition to attempt to determine precisely WHEN this event will take place. They read the signs of the times, cite scripture references, and consult popular prophetic predictions, some of which are centuries old. They purport to have a certain credibility in this discipline, gaining a hearing in some circles even if just an entertaining curiosity. But is it really necessary to know? It seems to me that if Jesus thought it was important for us to have that answer he would have been more specific when the disciples asked the question. All Jesus acknowledged is what scripture already confirms: the end will inevitably come.

What Jesus did spend some time detailing is what his disciples need to do before the end comes. He is quite clear that we must remain faithful, face persecution, endure suffering, face wars and insurrections, and give testimony. Jesus firmly reminds us that everything we have created, no matter how beautiful and durable we may find it to be, will pass

away. What is our level of attachment to earthly things? Even our houses of worship, shrines, and temples capture our attention and concern more than the one they are meant to honor. If what we seemingly will “lose” when the world comes to an end becomes a worry, obsession, or preoccupation, then we need wonder how deep our faith really is. Consumed with all of the things we have built and established for ourselves and seeking to preserve them, we forget that we belong to a different kingdom, the Kingdom of God. Are all of these things what we are ultimately called to preserve and serve?

The Gospel is always our guide. We can never tire or lose sight of our vocation to live just lives and be non-violent pursuers of peace. We are always and everywhere called to act on behalf of the poor, turning our cheek to those who hurt us most. But when powers that are dark, persistent, strong, and dominant override the path to peace and love that we hold so dear, we have to stand firm and realize whose kingdom we ultimately serve. We serve the Kingdom of God! Jesus cautions that we do not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed or overly terrified by the agonies, power struggles and disappointments of the world. Although we may be apprehensive and uncertain when faced with complex challenges, God is with us. God is the One who can never be taken away!

True, authentic, and unconditional love is not subject to time and seasons. It is always and forever. Our love of God must be the same. Our love of God must not be the love of sometimes or when it's convenient. What matters to us as we embrace a new moment or a new day in our lives? Preserving what we have established for ourselves or deepening our devotion to and relationship with God? If our relationship with God, the strength and integrity of our souls, and the steadfastness of our character are of utmost importance, then it matters little when the physical end will come. Our priorities will be in order, and we will be ready to go where God will take us. We will fall into the arms of love's author and become who we wanted to be all along. As St. Ignatius of Antioch reminds us, “only on my arrival there (in heaven with God) can I be fully a human being.” God will give us the strength and inspiration we need. We will discover the necessary courage ahead, in spite of persecution and even death itself.

Sometimes knowing too much is a bad thing. It can take the adventure, wonder and excitement out of living. Do you really want to know the exact day, hour, and circumstances of your death? Knowing too much can bring one to apathy, disillusionment, fear, anxiety, dread, and cynicism, robbing the soul of the love and freedom it needs to soar! Not knowing can be a beautiful thing! It allows for daily surprises, wonder and awe, new discoveries, playfulness, joy, contentment, and even laughter in the midst of the direst of circumstances. The unknown of the future allows us to discover the riches and depth of God, who is the delight and joy of our souls.

## Prayer

*Prayer of the Body of Christ*

We come from many nations;

We are one.

We come from many backgrounds;

We are one.

We are rich and poor, male and female;

We are one.

We are one in you, Christ Jesus,

And we call up on you to strengthen us

In the face of that which seeks to divide us.

May we steadfastly turn from hate

As we answer your call to love so that

Your kingdom may come.

Amen.

Learning to hold all of life's experiences in balance is one of the goals of the spiritual life. Finding our way through death and life, suffering and bliss, war and peace, anger and acceptance, love and hate, violence and peace, while still holding firm to the providential and unconditional love of God is paramount. Acts of violence and the brokenness of life can easily harden us and make us bitter. We have to resist this temptation and bring ourselves back to love. We must keep ourselves focused on what really matters and not get too dependent upon the material, tangible, and superficial. It is the only way we will find God and become who we are meant to be. Christians have to show others the path to unconditional love. The world desperately needs this message. People need to have their relationships with God, others, themselves, and the world restored to proper order so that all can work together in service of the Kingdom of God. This message is not always received with open and welcome arms. But, it is a message that must be heard and one that must be preached.

— Fr. Mark Suslenko