

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 17, 2024

How Great Thou Art

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the world today. The news is filled with stories of conflict, disaster, and division. We might feel like everything is falling apart around us—our lives, our communities, our world. In these moments, it can seem as if we're living in a time of darkness, where even the smallest light is hard to find. The prophet Daniel described a scene that resonates with such despair: "The sun will be darkened, the moon will not shed its light, stars will fall out of the sky, and the heavenly host will be shaken." This imagery powerfully captures the sense of chaos and uncertainty that often pervades our lives.

As we come to the end of the Church's liturgical year, today's Gospel from Mark also draws our attention to the end times. Mark's community of Roman Christians was enduring severe persecution. They were faced with the threat of torture and execution, and it felt as if their world was ending. In this context, Mark offers a message of hope. Though his words might seem ominous at first, they are meant to assure us that God is in control, even when everything seems lost. Jesus reminds us that while "the sun will be darkened and the moon will not shed its light," God's promises will not fail. Faith is believing in things unseen, holding firm even when the path ahead is unclear. As St. Paul reminds us, "We walk by faith, not by sight." This is the conviction that God is at work in the world, even when we can't see it. Mark's message to his community, and to us, is that God's love and sovereignty are unshakeable. Even when everything else is uncertain, we can trust that God is with us.

Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree to emphasize this point. He says, "When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near." This image speaks to the coming of God's kingdom in a new way. Just as the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD marked a profound change, so too do the challenges we face today point to God's presence and promise of renewal. Everything we see—our possessions, our achievements, even our struggles—are temporary and will pass away. What endures is God's word, God's love, and God's promise of new life.

As we prepare for the feast of Christ the King next week, and then enter the season of Advent, we are called to reflect on the enduring hope that Christ brings. No one knows the exact day or hour of God's coming—"not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." We are invited to live each day with faith, hope, and readiness, trusting that God's timing is perfect.

In the words of the hymn, "How Great Thou Art": "When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart. Then I shall bow, in humble adoration, and then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!" As we continue to navigate the uncertainties of life, let us hold fast to this hope, keeping faith and remaining prepared, trusting that God's greatness is at work in all things.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy