



33rd Week of the Year and the Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary 17 and 21 November 2024
Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The Readiness is All” (Hamlet 5)

Recent events in Spain with flooding in Valencia and Malaga, and the Climate Conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, have pushed us to be more aware of the future outcome of the way we treat our “common home” (a term used frequently by Pope Francis for the world we live in). Are we aware of the impact of our lifestyle on the future viability of the earth we share? Is it too late to slow down global warming? These are questions that concern governments everywhere. Events – like flooding or major world conferences are raising our awareness once more. What are we to do? We can't just let these matters pass us by; we all have a responsibility at whatever level.

The same can be said about the coming of Jesus whether it is for each of us at death or at the end of the world, which is the subject of what we call Apocalyptic Literature, a part of which we find in St Mark's Gospel Chapter 13, read on the 33rd Sunday of the Year. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) link the expectation of the end with a warning to keep on the watch. The Apostles Creed we sometimes say on a Sunday confesses “*He will come again to judge the living and the dead.*”

Fr Ferlita asks in his commentary: “*What should be our attitude....I think Shakespeare's Hamlet conveys the right attitude. Hamlet has arrived at a point in his life when he sees that he must act not out of murderous impulse but in accord with the providence of God. “There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how he will” (5.2.6-11) And later, sensing the possibility of his own death, he says: “There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now (meaning his own death), 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. For all of us, death will come long before the universe collapses in on itself (the Big Crunch prophesied by the famous Physicist Stephen Hawking who was confined to a wheelchair for years) if that is how it goes. Ferlita concludes “Trust in God therefore. Act in accord with his providence. Keep faith. Do not lose heart.”*

This coming week we are blessed to have the Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 21 November. Vatican News tells us “*the celebration of the Feast dates back to the 6th Century in the East with the dedication of the Basilica of St Mary the New by the Emperor Justinian I near the ruins of the Temple in Jerusalem.*” For the Memorial the Liturgy proposes the passage from St Matthew 12: 46-50 where Jesus says,

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“Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister and mother.” Mary was the Mother of Jesus humanly speaking, but she was also the one who showed us how to become part of the Lord’s Family. At the Incarnation she said *“Be it done unto me according to thy word”* that is the example she gave us for our own Faith Journey. *“Mary is the woman who knows how to listen, who knows how to contemplate, who knows how to refer everything to her Son – “Do whatever He tells you” (John 2:5). Mary is the one who never abandons her Son Jesus, not even along the way of the Cross. She ‘stood’ under the Cross....All of this can help us imitate the Virgin Mary. Every Christian is called to look at Mary so as to learn from her, to entrust themselves to her intercession and to guard the ‘purity of the faith’ against any idols that surround us.”* (Vatican News on the Memorial of the Presentation).

Yes, we live in times of change: the impact of global warming, political uncertainty, a world at war! The new translation of the Scriptures being adopted by the Church for Sunday Mass encourage us to look to God’s Word especially in uncertain times. Jesus’ words in the Gospel for the 33rd Sunday were *“not spoken to frighten his disciples, nor should they frighten us. Rather they are offered to prepare us for the changes we will experience during our lifetime and at the end times. Our consolation and hope is found in the lasting nature of Jesus’ word and God’s never-ending love for us.”* (The Loyola Commentary).

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