

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus uses natural and supernatural images to tell his friends about the confusion and turmoil they will witness. While he may well have been referring to the time of his passion, they also remembered his words as they witnessed the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Those events and their own persecution caused the disciples unimaginable disorientation, leaving them feeling as if their word had come to an end.

Jesus warned them that time and space will no longer make sense. The sun that tells the time, the moon that marks the seasons, and the stars by which earthling can orient themselves, all those will falter. But says Jesus, that will also be the sign that they should watch for the Son of Man coming in power and glory.

Apocalyptic visions present a panorama of destruction that will affect everyone, but not everyone will respond in the same way.

At the same time, Jesus warns us, "Of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the father." Jesus went to the cross believing that God would raise him on the third day which meant in God's good time. Jesus preached about an apocalypse to invite his disciples to share his hope, to believe that God continues to be at work on behalf of beloved humanity, even when we do not perceive it. The Lord says, after describing the signs at the end, "the Son of Man will come to gather His chosen ones." That is not a threat but a promise. The Letter to the Hebrews says that Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice once and for all; its power of forgiveness will be present even to the end of human history. That's not a threat but a promise.

Whenever the end will come, God's grace will be there as well to bring salvation and strength to His people. That's the good news of these readings.

We do not know when the end will come. But, whenever that final conflict will occur, we still have the daily conflict in our life. The promises of these readings hold true not just for that final generation of Christians but for us today, right now. We are given God's grace and protection in our struggles. We have the Son of Man Who comes to us in the sacraments to give us His truth and His grace. We have the great sacrifice of Christ with its forgiveness made present in every Mass. Our local part in that great worldwide struggle of good and evil that runs throughout history takes very personal forms. Yet we have the same equipment today that God's people will have at the end of history: the protection of God, the grace of God, the forgiveness of God. So, Jesus assures his disciples that no matter what terrible suffering they endure, life will rise again in them through his power.

The readings today give hope that everlasting radiance and tender new beginnings come after refinement in the fiery furnace of suffering.

So many things come and go in our life, in our world. But the promise given in our Scriptures is that in the end, the end of our life and at the end of our world, there will always be Christ!