

33 Sunday B

November 18, 2018

St. Patrick

Beginning this Sunday and continuing through the coming Advent, the church hones in on our final destiny, “the last times,”—that is, what happens after we take our last earthly breathe. As part of that, during November we remember lovingly our deceased loved ones—as our Book of Remembrance is placed near the lit paschal candle.

“**In those days**”—both the first reading and our Gospel begin with that curious phrase...“**in those days.**” What days?—and what about *our* days?

At the start of November, we celebrate the Feast of All Saints. Now, Friends, I tell you that over the years of being a priest, I’ve seen hundreds—*hundreds*—of students dress up as a particular saint, and tell their saint’s story to parents, friends...and their priest. I’ve learned about saints I’ve never heard of! I have to say, though, that the saint most often depicted—hands down, St. Michael the Archangel. Boys love being St. Michael. They wear a white robe, have wings sprouting from their shoulders, and hold menacingly in their right hand a spear (cut-out from cardboard, and carefully wrapped in aluminum foil). Not only that, St. Michael is easy: he is named only twice in the Bible.

Today, we hear one of those two times when St. Michael is named—from the Old Testament Book of Daniel. It was a time when the world seemed to be falling apart. Evil seemed to be having the upper hand. The chosen people felt besieged, and they needed hope to hold onto. (1)

St. Patrick’s: “*In our time,*” evil seems to be having the upper hand. We watch the firestorm infernos engulfing parts of California. We are traumatized by the terror unleashed against Jews during their Sabbath worship. White nationalists, Hitler fanatics, and other hate groups show their muscle. Evil seems to have the upper hand, and how do we respond with hope—without becoming filled with hate like those who unleash verbal venom and hatred?

After St. Michael makes his entrance in the struggle against evil, the Book of Daniel gives one of the earliest Old Testament passages about the resurrection of the body. Listen again: “**Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever...shining brightly like the splendor of the**

firmament.” Oh, it’s a complete transformation. It’s the anchor of our lasting hope. It will come about on that last day, when—as Jesus speaks about himself in today’s Gospel—**“the Son of Man coming in the clouds’ with great power and glory and gather his elect from the four winds.”**

I have to say: Many Catholics, I suspect, think of heaven—the afterlife—for our souls only. *“We just want to save our soul,”* as folks put it. And, many think, our body ultimately becomes dust.

Ben Franklin died in 1790 at the age of 84. At the age of 22, he composed this inscription for his gravestone:

“The body of B. Franklin, printer; like the cover of an old book, its contents worn out and stript of the lettering and gilding, lies here, food for worms. But the work shall not be wholly lost; for it will, as he believed, appear once more, in a new and more perfect edition, corrected and amended by the Author.” (2)

Yes...**“corrected and amended by the Author.”** That’s God’s work, and it will take place when the Risen Christ, now at the Father’s right hand, will return in glory on the last day. We live with that ultimate hope—of **“a new and more perfect edition,”** a complete transformation.

As the Eucharistic Prayer puts it beautifully during Funeral Masses: **“...From the earth the Risen Christ will raise up in the flesh those who have died, and transform our lowly body after the pattern of his own glorious body.”**

Yes, when sadness and evil seem to have the upper hand, we need St. Michael the Archangel—as the prayer to him goes, **“be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.”** In that struggle, each day, we have our one hope in the victory of the Risen Jesus.

And so we cry out, **“Come, Lord Jesus, come!”**

(1) See Dianne Bergant, “Traditional New Age Theology,” in America (November 10, 2003) @www.deaconsil.com, under “33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time—November 15, 2015.”

(2) Quoted by Mark Link, S.J., in Mission 2000: Praying Scripture in a Contemporary Way (Allen, Texas: Tabor Publishing, 1992), pg. 404

General Intercessions

November 18, 2018

33 Sunday in Ordinary Time

Unite your church in one glorious song of praise, and bring healing within our church; we pray to you, O Lord—

Bless our diocese with a new bishop who has deep faith, courage, wisdom and love; we pray to you, O Lord—

Deepen closeness and gratitude within our families during these coming days; and bring reconciliation within fractured families; we pray to you, O Lord—

Open our hearts to extend welcome to all searching for a life free from violence and poverty, especially immigrants and refugees; we pray to you, O Lord—

Come to the relief of all peoples affected by natural disasters, especially from the wildfires in California; and give safety to all first responders; we pray to you, O Lord—

Give to the faithful departed everlasting peace and joy in your presence, especially Freddie Chang, Olga Fiorino; all who have been killed in the wildfires; and all who are named in our Book of Remembrance during this month of November; we pray to you, O Lord—

