

33rd Sunday (C)

- I went to open the door of my car a few months ago in North Fitzroy, a place notorious for parking fines when I noticed what I thought was a parking infringement ticket on my windscreen under the wiper.
- I took it with dread from under the wiper & was relieved to find that it wasn't a ticket but a pamphlet.
- It invited me to consider where I wanted to spend eternity.
- Inside the pamphlet was a laboriously written note with many misspellings.
- It warned me about the imminent arrival of the Second Coming of Jesus and asked whether I was ready to meet him.
- I have smiled at people who hand out these end-of-the-world pamphlets and & preach these messages, but I believe that end-of-the-world people perform a valuable service for us - they keep the Second Coming before our eyes & remind us that God has a plan for created order and that there is more than what we now know & experience in this life, in this dimension of living.
- Though they interpret scripture literally, people such as these forcefully remind us ultimately about our own belief.
- After all, in each Sunday's Liturgy we recite in the Creed, *"He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead."*
- After the Consecration, we say, *"Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again."*
- In the Our Father we pray for the Second Coming in the prayer Jesus Himself taught us; we even implore, *"Your kingdom come."*
- When we declare our faith in this final coming of Jesus we are saying that we believe that evil will not ultimately triumph because evil is self-destructive.
- Our hope is that we and others will be changed by God's love to cease oppressing and hurting others, and that love will triumph because we want people to open their hearts to the love of God & be open to God's wonderful plans for us.
- We are reminding ourselves of the goal of this life when all our deepest longings will be fulfilled - provided, that is, we do not allow ourselves to be totally distracted and give in to soul-destroying behaviour.
- When bad things happen to good people, as is the situation widely around the world today with wars & fires, floods & droughts brought on by climate change, when they happen to us, we have choices.
- We can give into desolation, depression and despair.
- This is understandable and tragic. Or we can choose to hope.
- Christian hope is not about 'pie in the sky when we die'.
- It is not about 'putting on a happy face, come what may', but is based on the justice God wants in this world, and will see done in the next.

- We would be unwise to get into the predicting business.
- Many religious groups in our lifetime have grandly prophesied both the day, hour, and minute.
- For all their efforts they have come up with an embarrassing let-down when it doesn't happen.
- So the advice of Jesus that we know not the day nor the hour is good to heed.
- Someone once said, *"Plan then as if Christ's return were years away, but live as though it were today - what matters is not the timing but the fact."*
- In the meantime, we as Christians have much to do.
- Unlike the people who Paul criticises in his letter to the Thessalonians, we cannot idle our time away; nor can we afford the luxury, as Paul says, of minding everybody's business but our own.
- We need to become more vibrant Catholics, giving life to the world and witnessing to the values of the Gospel taught by Jesus with a belief & hope in a future that is consistent with God's plan for us – a plan that is about fulfilment & completion - perfection.
- One way of doing that is by making the world about us a more attractive place to live in, not because we want to confine ourselves to this world, but because the second coming is not about the destruction of this world, but its completion and fulfillment.
- We contribute NOW to the shape and condition of both the completed & broken creation in the end time.
- Christ's resurrected body is the model - it is raised and glorified after the resurrection, but also manifests the wounds inflicted by the evil of people.
- How is the world a better place for your being here?
- Perhaps you may find your mandate in this summation written by some clever author:
- *"It is up to you to illuminate the area around you. You do not have to groan over everything your community lacks. You are there to bring it what it needs. Where hatred, malice, and discord reign, you will put love, pardon, and peace. For lying you will bring truth. For despair, hope. For doubt, faith. There where there is sadness, you will give joy."*