

From the Pastor's Desk

HOPE will not disappoint.

As you know, the month of November is a time when the Church traditionally centers our thoughts on end times and at the same time prays for all those who have gone before us. We mourn our loss of loved ones, we pray for their eternal salvation, and we hope to be reunited with them when we ourselves go to our eternal reward. The Church uses the end of the *Liturgical Year* (a new year begins in two weeks with the Season of Advent) to reflect on the end of our lives and the end of time. Though we do not know the day or the hour, Jesus reassures us that we are in the hands of a faithful and merciful God.

So it is, that the readings today focus on the end of time. Daniel prophesies the resurrection of those who have died; this was a truly radical notion in Daniel's time. God does not lose anything that God has created. The author of Hebrews (it is unknown who wrote it) emphasizes the fact that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross atoned for all sin, the sins of all people of every age and time, those "come-and-gone" and of those not yet born. And Jesus in Mark's Gospel warns his disciples of difficult times to come, of terrible signs of the end of time. But Jesus also reassures the disciples that God's elect will be gathered from the ends of the earth to be united with himself in glory. The promises of Christ and the faithfulness of our Creator strengthen us and encourage us to face the future with **unwavering hope**.

Easter is a movable solemnity, not assigned to fixed date. As such, it is often earlier than it is this year. Why am I mentioning Easter here just before Advent? Because we hear Scriptures this weekend that we often do not hear when Easter is earlier, these scary, climactic end-times readings. These readings are not for the faint of heart, full of apocalyptic images and threatening scenes. Perhaps, these readings make us uncomfortable, but it is good for us to hear them.

First, they remind us that life is short, that time has meaning, that how we "spend" our days has significant repercussions. It's interesting that we borrow our language about time from the world of

business and finance. How you live your life, how you spend your time, how you invest your time, has consequences and eternal significance. These scriptures remind us that time is precious, all sobering thoughts.

We come together every Sunday to dedicate the time of the week ahead to the praise of God and the building up of the Kingdom of God.

Second, if time has meaning, if time is a gift from God to be cherished and respected, then so are the "moments" of our time, the things and, most especially, the people of this life. If we are to remember that the time of our lives is precious, is pregnant with possibilities, then certainly we must remember that everything we have is a gift of a faithful and loving God.

These readings call us to look at life from the perspective of "eternal life," of how we will "live" after our earthly pilgrimage is done.

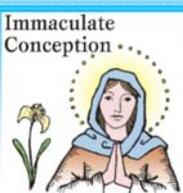
Paul F. Bosch writes, The first word God spoke over the world was *tov*, in the Hebrew of the first book in our Bible: the word means "good." God saw everything that God had made, and "*behold, it was very good.*"

Jesus makes clear that the final word of God will also be good. And God has made all creation subject to us mere human beings, for better or worse. Perhaps, in times of great distress it is difficult to see the good. But God is faithful, eternally faithful.

Both Jesus and Daniel promise, amid the times of distress, reward for those that God has chosen. Daniel writes that those "*written in the book*" shall escape. Jesus tells the disciples that the "elect" will be gathered by the angels. God remains stronger than any possible force and **God is faithful**. And God will rescue all those who have been found worthy.

And we are made worthy, not by merit, but by the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Fr. Bob



The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on Saturday, Dec. 8th, is a Holy Day of Obligation, celebrating Mary being conceived free from sin in St. Anne's womb.

Mass times: Friday, December 7th, 6:00 PM at St. Francis

Saturday, December 8th, 8:30 AM at St. Stephen

Going to regular mass on Saturday evening (4:00 or 6:30 PM) DOES NOT satisfy this Obligation.