

Homily 33rd Sun. Year C: Christ's 2nd Coming & the Antichrist

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Today we hear these awe-inspiring words from the Prophet Malachi: “Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire, says the Lord of hosts. But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.”

Of what “day” does the Prophet Malachi speak? He refers to the Day of the Lord, the final day of the world, when Jesus, the Son of Justice, will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Today is the 33rd Sunday of the Church’s liturgical year, which comes to an end next Sunday with the Feast of Christ the King. It is most fitting that as the Church’s liturgical year comes to an end, that the readings focus on the end of the world, the “End Times” as they are called.

In our Gospel today from St. Luke, Jesus describes two events:

first, the destruction of Jerusalem & the Temple that would take place in 70 A.D by the Roman armies under the Emperor Trajan. Re the Temple He says: “there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down” (only “wailing wall” left);

and **second**, He describes the things that will precede His Second Coming.

Why does he speak of both events in the same context? Because the violence and upheaval that would accompany the destruction of the Temple will be both a small version, and a foreshadowing, of the violence and turmoil that will come before the end of the world.

In ch. 21 of St. Luke’s Gospel, as well as in ch. 24 of St. Matthew’s and ch. 13 of St. Mark’s, Our Lord reveals the signs that will precede the end of the world and His Second Coming – some remote signs (in distant future), and some immediate signs.

For example, in today’s Gospel from St. Luke we hear Jesus say: “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place.” Sin and evil will increase.

And in today’s Gospel from St. Luke, as well as in the Gospels of Saints Matthew and Mark, Jesus warns us: “*Do not be deceived, for many will come in my name*

saying, 'I am he.'" -- Here Our Lord is speaking of many false Christs, or "antichrists," who will come throughout the centuries and will lead people away from His true Gospel and the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church that He founded on Peter and the Apostles.

St. John the Evangelist, in his first epistle, speaks of "many antichrists" who will come; he describes them in these words: "*Who is the Antichrist? He who denies that Jesus is the Christ, and who denies the Father and the Son, is an antichrist* (1 Jn. 2:22).

In fact, there have been many antichrists throughout history – precursors of the final Antichrist; some were *religious* leaders: like Arius (the 4th century priest who denied that Jesus was the eternal Son of God), Mohammed, the founder of Islam (who likewise denied that Jesus was God), and Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism (who denied that Jesus was eternal Son of God the Father); some who were *secular* leaders: like the Emperor Nero – who demanded worship of himself as a god; and more recently, Hitler, Stalin and Mao Zedong, who also really made themselves out to be venerated like gods, and the State to be worshipped.

But immediately before Jesus' 2nd Coming, the final Antichrist will come, he whom St. Paul refers to in 2 Thess as "**the lawless one**" and the "**man of perdition**" (2:3) who "exalts himself above every so-called god . . . claiming that he is a god" (2:4).

This is the man whom St. John, in the Book of Revelation, refers to as "**the Beast**" (ch. 13) and assigns to him the mysterious number of "**666**" (13:18) – and says that only those who have the mark of the Beast will be able to buy and sell.

This "man of iniquity" will openly deny Our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God who came in the flesh.

Christ came in the name of His Father; the Antichrist will come, as Jesus tells us, "in his own name" (Jn. 5:43).

What will be the signs, and what will pave the way, for worldwide acceptance of this great deceiver, the Antichrist? St. Paul reveals to us in 2 Thess. that before the "man of perdition" appears, there must first come "the **great apostasy**," i.e, the great falling away from the faith by masses of people throughout the world.

Once people have fallen away from the true faith and belief in Jesus Christ, they will readily accept someone who deceives them into thinking that he is the Messiah.

Saints and scholars are of the opinion that the Antichrist will come at a time when there will be great upheaval in the world, possibly when powerful nations will be on the brink of war; the Antichrist will then appear on the world scene, masquerading

as a man of peace. He will deceive government leaders throughout the world, who will hand over to him all political and economic power; then, when his power is consolidated, he will impose a false religion, false worship, and ultimately demand worship of himself. (Cf. Msgr. Hugh Benson's superb book, *Lord of the World*.)

Both the Prophet Daniel and the Book of Revelation reveal that the Antichrist will rule the world for 3 ½ years (in imitation of Christ's 3 ½ years of public ministry); during which time he will **bring a true reign of terror** upon the Church, and will unleash the last and greatest persecution upon the faithful that the world has ever seen.

The Prophet Daniel says: "*It shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since nations began until that time. . . . many shall fall away and evil shall increase*" (Dan. Ch. 12). Some saints think that the persecution will be so great that, during the reign of the Antichrist, the Mass will not be offered publicly anywhere in the world, based on the Prophet Daniel's words: "*He [the Antichrist] will abolish sacrifice and oblation*" (i.e., *the Sacrifice of the Mass*).

But it will also be the time of the greatest saints and martyrs, those who are most devoted to Our Lady – because, as the Book of Genesis (3:15) tells us, the battle will be between the serpent (Satan) and "the woman" (Mary), between his seed and her seed (i.e., Mary's Son, Our Lord), and **she will crush his head**.

Finally, Jesus will bring the Antichrist's reign to an end, at which time, with His Second Coming, Jesus will definitively establish Kingdom.

The best book on this topic: *The Antichrist*, by Fr. Vincent Miceli, S.J.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives us sound teaching and guidance on these matters:

675 "Before Christ's second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the "mystery of iniquity" in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo [or false] messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh."

677 "The Church will enter the glory of the kingdom only through this final Passover, . . . only by God's victory over the final unleashing of evil, . . . God's

triumph over the revolt of evil will take the form of the Last Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this passing world.”

When will all these things happen? When will the Antichrist make his appearance? Could we live to see the day?

Sister Lucy, the third Fatima visionary, died in 2005 as a Carmelite nun. In a 1957 interview with Fr. Augustine Fuentes, who at that time was the postulator for the cause of canonization of the other two Fatima visionaries, Jacinta and Francisco, Sister Lucy said this to him:

“Father, the Most Holy Virgin did not *tell me* that we are in the last times of the world *but* She made me *understand this* for [the following] reasons. The first reason is because She told me that **the devil is in the mood for engaging in a decisive battle against the Virgin. And a decisive battle is the final battle** where one side will be victorious and the other side will suffer defeat. Hence from now on we must choose sides. Either we are for God or we are for the devil. There is no other possibility.

“The second reason is because . . . God is giving two last remedies to the world. These are the Holy Rosary and Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

Cardinal Carlo Caffarra in an interview in 2017 told how he had received a handwritten note from Sr. Lucia back in the 1983, in response a letter he had written asking for her prayers. Sister Lucia’s letter: “**Father, a time will come when the decisive battle between the kingdom of Christ and Satan will be over marriage and the family.** And those who will work for the good of the family will experience persecution and tribulation. But do not be afraid, because Our Lady has already crushed his head.”

Cardinal Caffarra believed these words of Sr. Lucia were being fulfilled in our present age, especially with the **horrors of abortion** and the **legalization of homosexual marriage**.

And consider these words spoken by a Polish bishop at a meeting of bishops in Philadelphia in early November 1978: “*We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. I do not think that wide circles of the American society or wide circles of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the church and the anti-church, of the Gospel versus the anti-gospel.*”

That Polish bishop was none other than Carol Wojtyla, who was later elected Pope and took the name John Paul II, and who is now St. John Paul II.

These are sobering words, indeed. What does our Lord want us to do? To be faithful to Him; to be prepared, which means to always be in a state of grace (because in the end, all that really matters is that we die in a state of grace).

We know not the day nor the hour of His glorious return. The key to being prepared is to persevere in remaining faithful. In today's Gospel Jesus assures us: "He who perseveres to the end will be saved."

Let us remember also the two remedies: the Holy Rosary and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Let us pray the Rosary – daily – as Our Lady beseeched us to do at Fatima. And let us show devotion and honor to her Immaculate Heart, knowing that it is through her pierced Heart that we enter into the Heart of her Son, Our Redeemer, and remain in His love. (A reminder: Every 1st Saturday of the month we have morning Mass with devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary!)

Finally, let us remember that the victory is ours, if we remain faithful, for Christ has already conquered by His death and glorious Resurrection; and as Our Lady told us at Fatima, "*In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.*" **How?** The Blessed Virgin Mary, the "Woman" of Genesis 3:15, will crush the proud head of the serpent (Satan) under her foot!