

## **Homily For Tuesday of the 34th Week of Ordinary Time- Year II**

### **St Peter's 8:30am Mass - Nov 24, 2020**

(St. Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions - Memorial)

**Rev 14: 14-19** "Another angel came out of the temple."

**Psalm 96: 10-13** "The Lord is king. He will judge the peoples with equity"

**Luke 21: 5-11** "Jesus said: The days will come when not one stone will be left upon another."

### **He Will Judge With Equity**

#### **Introduction**

There is no way to make light of these readings. It's certainly not elevator music or easy listening. What we can do is step back and look at the big picture of God's purpose, God's plan for the salvation of the world, but also its judgment. As we come to the end of our liturgical year, we are faced with the biblical images of how the plan has been unfolding and how it will unfold.

Should we be shocked by what has happened to us this year? Should we be afraid of how our lives are going to unfold and what is going to take place? Should we give up easily the peace we have in Christ? Should we hope that we can eventually go back to whatever we were doing before?

These questions, I suggest, are not far from the concerns and anxieties that have been asked by people of all times. It certainly drove the disciples to ask Jesus questions about what was going to happen next. I think our anxiety levels may be similar so it is a very good time for us to pay attention to his answers to them.

#### **Three Temples**

There are always two big questions for people of faith: Where is God and what is he doing? God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. God freed a people from physical slavery. God spoke from a mountain, travelled with the people in a tent, was visible as a cloud of smoke and a pillar of fire. God allowed himself to be contained in a box, the ark, then in a temple built by Solomon. It looked like God was lost when the temple was destroyed and the people were taken into exile.

But Herod, a non Jew, built an absolutely gorgeous new temple to make himself their king. It looked like a temple worthy to house God's presence, and was treated as such.

Then came Jesus, the living temple of God's presence, saying that the indestructible and beautiful appearance of Herod's temple is only an illusion.

### **The End of the Old Covenant**

Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem and the temple, at the end of his ministry, foretells the coming devastation of Jerusalem not too many years later, in 70 AD. One after the other, the various false 'Messiahs' would be killed and, finally, the Romans trampled Jerusalem. They systematically took that temple apart, removing every huge stone and removing every beautiful ornament. That catastrophic event was the judgment signalling the end of the Old Covenant made with one nation, Israel.

### **The End of the New Covenant Final Judgment**

It also prefigured the judgment of all nations at the end of the New Covenant. But we have to understand this judgment of God. The psalmist in today's readings gets it perfectly. We think we can figure out how to develop systems that bring equality. Those efforts have merit, but it is only God who can judge equitably because he is the one who is fully righteous, the one who is truth itself. Even the trees of the forest will sing for joy because, it says, because all truth and all fairness will be seen.

John's vision of the final judgment of all nations has a new temple. It is God himself, with Jesus as the righteous king who reigns. Angels come from the altar of that temple.

The image of the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked is a harvest of wheat and grapes. That should remind us of bread and wine and Christ's true present. The saints are gathered up like sheaves of wheat to be stored in a granary while sinners are severed like grapes from the vine to be thrown into a mill press and crushed.

At that time, all peoples will behold his splendor and lament their participation in sin.

## **The Signs**

I can imagine that Fr. Andrew Dung-Lac, Fr. Peter Thi, and Paul Le Tinh saw what looked like signs of the end. What is striking is this Vietnamese St. Paul's description of the horrors the Christian prisoners experienced at the hands of their torturers doing everything they could to wipe out Christ's presence in the people. Like the first St. Paul in prison, they must have wondered if this was a final judgment. But it was not the end and today, in the church right here we have evidence of how the Vietnamese Christians persevered through those terrible trials and enrich us even now.

Wars and plagues and violence always sound like the end, but Jesus says: Don't be fooled. There will be tyrants and torture and nation against nation and natural calamities and plagues, even like this one. We have all those. We always have those.

## **Our Faith**

But we are not to depend on those. Instead, we are to turn again to Christ. We are to repent again. We are to freshly hear those words we say in the creed: He will come again to judge the living and the dead. That's what we say every time we affirm our faith.

Our anxiety at what is happening and what will happen still needs to be transformed by the renewal of our minds, by allowing ourselves to be crucified with Christ, by allowing Christ's life to be lived in us, by repentance - by turning back to God. This is the way of peace. This is the way of assurance that none of the signs and portents, the wars, plagues and earthquakes will trouble us because we are being harvested. The Lord is even now looking for good fruit.

Let us be harvested with the wheat and not the weeds. Let us recognize that even this tribulation leads us to the fulfilment of his plan, as chastisements to lead us to the fullness of his peace.

## **Key Passages**

**Collect:** *O God, who kept the Martyrs Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and his companions faithful to the cross of your Son, even to the shedding of their blood.*

**Revelation:** *I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand ... So he swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Then another angel came out from the altar, who has authority over fire, and called: Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and he threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God.*

**Psalm:** *Say among the nations, The Lord is king! He will judge the peoples with equity ... The Lord is coming to judge the earth with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.*

**Luke:** *Some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones. Jesus said, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another. They asked him: Teacher when will this be, and what will be the sign. Jesus said: Beware that you are not led astray, for many will come in my name and say: I am he! When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first. Jesus said to them: Nation will rise against nation. There will be great earthquakes, famines and plagues, dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.*

**Andrew Dung-Lac:** *in Vietnam, from the 17th to 19th centuries, 130,000 Christians were martyred. Andrew Dung-Lac and Peter Thi were beheaded on December 21, 1839. A letter from a prisoner: I, Paul, in chains for the name of Christ, relate to you the trials besetting me daily. The prison here is a true image of everlasting hell: cruel tortures of every kind. But the God who once freed the three children from the fiery furnace is with me always. In June 1986, Pope John Paul II declared 117 Vietnamese martyrs saints of the Church.*