

Homily for November 29, 2019
Friday 34th Week of Ordinary Time

In the Gospels, 78 times Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man. It is his favourite self-designation. The most important occurrence of the Son of Man title in the Old Testament comes from the passage we just read from Daniel 7.

Daniel's dream, which features four beasts from the sea, parallels Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which surveys the four metals of a statue (2:31–35), which we heard read on Tuesday. Both represent a succession of Near Eastern empires that gives way to the messianic kingdom of God. Jewish and Christian tradition typically identify (1) the winged lion as *Neo-Babylonia*, often depicted as a sphinx in Mesopotamian art; (2) the bear as *Medo-Persia*, the three ribs in its teeth being its three major conquests of Lydia (547 B.C.), Babylon (539 B.C.), and Egypt (525 B.C.); (3) the leopard as *Greece*, which enlarged its dominion with incredible speed, having four wings and heads representing the four generals of Alexander the Great who inherited his vast empire; and (4) the indescribable beast as *Rome*, whose horns are its emperors and whose territory and military might surpassed all predecessors.¹

In verse 8 we read of a little horn of whom it is said in Daniel 7:21, a verse we did not read today:

*As I looked, this horn made war with the saints, and prevailed over them,*²

The best candidate for this little horn is Nero, the first Roman emperor to instigate a savage persecution of the Church (Tacitus, *Annals* 15, 44). The Book of Revelation depicts Nero, whose name has the numerical value 666, as the beast that rises from the sea (Rev 13:1) and utters “haughty and blasphemous words” against the Lord³

It is as these earthly kingdoms in succession are exercising dominion on earth, the scene then changes to the dominion in heaven where we are told that the Ancient of Days, God the Father, entrusts to Jesus, the Son of Man authority described this way.

*I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven*

¹ Hahn, S., & Mitch, C. (2013). [*Daniel: With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes*](#) (Second Catholic Edition, p. 31). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

² [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Da 7:21). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

³ Hahn, S., & Mitch, C. (2013). [*Daniel: With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes*](#) (Second Catholic Edition, p. 32). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

*there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
14 And to him was given dominion
and glory and kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.*

Here is stated the Church's perennial claim. That as history continues to unfold with earthly kingdoms rising and falling, leaders often governing with self-serving and destructive motives, the true King Jesus – the Son of Man is always reigning.

As we come to the end of the Liturgical Year we are encouraged to remember that regardless of the world's chaos, we look to the throne room of God and the one seated on the throne as we persistently pray and live out here below "the kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". We trustingly offer this prayer because, as Jesus says in today's Gospel, his words will never pass away – and his purpose so clearly expressed in Revelation will be realized. 11:15:

*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Messiah,
and he will reign forever and ever."*⁴

One day, throughout the Universe, after His 2nd coming, a theme of Advent, we will know with certainty – what we present affirm by faith:

Jesus Christ our Lord and King of the Universe.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Re 11:15). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.