33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time Sr. Kathy Osbelt

Nov. 14 & 15, 2015 All Saints Parish, Syr. NY

Next Sunday being Christ the King Sunday, this is the last Sunday of the year of Ordinary Time. The church chooses these readings warning us of end-times, and yet they are read every year and we are still here! There is a Peanuts cartoon I am reminded of: Peppermint Patty is at a summer camp operated by a fundamentalist religious group. There she hears that Jesus is coming soon, perhaps tomorrow or next week for sure. The world is coming to an end. So we had better get ready! Peppermint Patty goes to use the phone to call and make sure dad knows and is getting ready. But there are other kids in line to use the phone. While she is waiting she notices a display on the wall of architects rendering of the camp’s five year plan for new buildings. Getting out of line she mutters: “The world may be coming to an end tomorrow, but I wasn’t born yesterday!

Jesus warns that the sun will be darkened and the moon lose its brightness, the stars will fall from the sky and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.” This is no way states that our God is a mean and vengeful God. The truth is more with us which is why we need to sit up and take heed. If there is to be an Armageddon, it will be brought upon us by us and the choices we make that speak of hate, greed, violence, domination and selfish ego. Indeed, we have the choice to make this earth a common home where we experience and share the gifts and blessing of our loving God or destroy these gifts and ourselves in the process.

The book of Daniel read today gives another warning: Many sleeping will awake; some will wake to shame and disgrace. Those who are enlightened and lead the many to justice will shine. Yes, we are waking up, waking to the fact that the poverty, droughts, and extreme weather are due to our past practices and these must change. Others will remain closed and commit us to everlasting disgrace. We can lead others to justice before we permanently lose more of the marvelous, generous gifts of God.

Jesus foretells of darkness to come. If we do not see ourselves as being in relationship with all things, those who are poor, all things of our earth home, we shall be in darkness for sure. Etty Hillesum, a young imprisoned Jew in Nazi occupied Amsterdam noted: “Each of us moves things along in the direction of war every time we fail to love.”

Adversely, if we love we move things in the direction of healing.

Our work must be that of making Wholeness. We have to mend what has been separated. Only then will Christ’s Kingdom come, when we see ourselves as one, then the dawn of a new day will come.

Our Pope has led the way with the encyclical Laudato Si. It states: Changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. Who are these People? Are they not our brothers and sisters? Are we not one?

The challenge is that our encounter with Jesus Christ becomes evident in our relationship with the world around us.

Our job is not to speculate about the end time but to make sure that we are living as our Abba, Our God, wants us to live.

On a recent trip to New Jersey, I was listening to Mayflower by Nathaniel Philbrick. For 12 hours I was hearing for the first time the true history of the Puritans (Pilgrims) and their relationship with the Native Americans. The Thanksgiving celebration was really at the end of harvest in September or October. The peaceful relationship between the Native Americans and pilgrims took many months to build. There were those who pillaged Native American stored foods, sold land that had been Native American’s, and pillaged abandoned Native American homes. For the first 20 years the two groups worked with a peace accord and honored one another’s property. But the next generation forgot how the Native Americans saved the 1st settlers of Plymouth through that 1st winter. With prejudice, greed and injustice and violence, that next generation destroyed the peace, ignored the rights of Native Americans and wiped out entire tribes.

What about us, three centuries later? Have we remembered the kindness of those who have cared for our lands; struggled for peace with other nations; gave of their means so others can live? Is our memory too poor? Have we become short sighted?

From Laudato Si: “Heartfelt repentance and desire to change entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift, and that we are called to imitate God’s generosity in self-sacrifice and good works… and it also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion.”