

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Nov. 16 & 17, 2013

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My Dear Brothers and Sisters, as I was reading the Gospel earlier this week, my first thought was to give this homily carrying a board that says: **Repent! The end of the world is near!** and look unshaven, with messed up hair, with a wild, crazy, unseeing stare in my eyes, and with my glasses hanging on one ear. But, however much fun that may have been: NO. It is true that the idea about the end of our world takes up most of the text in the reading for today, but the really significant message, is not about that. It is about what we should do right now, as we await with joyful hope the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

First of all, we should not be afraid. I have not counted how many times Jesus said to his disciples: "Don't be afraid," but He said it many times. And more specifically about the end of the world, He said: "*When you see all this, lift up your heads with confidence, for your salvation is at hand.*"

Meanwhile our task is not to be led astray by the evil one, not to be deceived by false teachings. As Jesus says: "*See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name saying **I am he and the time has come.** Do not follow them.*" So, my dear Sisters and Brothers, this interim period is the time for wise discernment with the help of the whole Church, and most of all, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

I would like to mention just a couple of examples about this discernment that is special for our time. Ever since the Second Vatican Council, we experience a conflict, a tension in the Church, between two groups, the conservatives, and the progressives. It is the strategy of evil to divide and conquer. We have seen this strategy in action many times in our past history. One example is the effort to divide the created unity of our humanity into two parts, the body and the spirit, and to call one evil, and the other good, and then set them against one another in a mortal combat. We have seen this ever since the third century up to present times. This strategy '*Divide and Conquer*' is present in all controversies. Take, for example, the Creation versus Evolution controversy. The idea is that, one either accepts evolution which is assumed to deny Creation as it is presented in the book of Genesis, or one preserves one's faith but then must reject science. The truth is that God **is** creating an unfolding process of life. And knowing that, there is no more controversy, because neither the right of faith, nor the right of science is being denied. Science gives substance to our faith, and faith gives meaning to our science.

And what about the conflict between the conservatives and the progressives in our time? We experience substantial changes as time goes on. What do we learn from the wisdom of tradition? We learn to respond to the needs of a given time with the knowledge of that time. It is strange, but actually it is the progressives who are doing what tradition requires, as they try to respond to present needs with present, and not with past, knowledge. Otherwise, we may become dysfunctional. And that results in loss of credibility, and that will surely damage faith. At the very heart of the second Vatican Council we find the idea of *aggiornamento*, that is: adaptability: as needs and knowledge change, so should our responses change in order to remain functional. After all, as experience shows, we do not live in a frozen, static world.

My Sisters and Brothers, in all this, we should remain steadfast in praying for the wonderful gifts of faith, hope, and love, and we should always and every time respond to evil with something that is truly good, such as consoling words, caring love, and generous forgiveness.

And so, during this interim period between now and the end of the world, we are always ready to discern what is right, and so build God's kingdom with a deep sense of joy and security in God's loving and merciful presence. Amen.