

Homily for the 33rd Sunday in Ord.
Nov. 14-15, 2009 “B”

One of my Brothers likes to say “I won’t mind going to Hell, because that’s where all my friends will be. Har, Har!” I tell him, that’s not your Hell, that’s their Hell.

The readings this week are a preparation for the end of the Church year. They direct our minds to the things that really matter in the end, life and death, Heaven and Hell.

This is an opportunity to ask, “How did I live this past year? Did I use the grace of God to grow in holiness?” In the end it will not be certificates of merit that matter, it will be faithfulness to God. In the end it will not be wealth that matters, rather, how we have used our wealth. It won’t be power that matters; it will be our willingness to submit to the teachings of Christ.

This past Friday, I took the 8th grade class to Calvary Cemetery as part of their Religion Class. We walked around the graves and read the names and the dates. We prayed for all the dead, and we talked about our Catholic understanding of death.

We saw the grave of a man who had the letters C.H.E.V. before his name. The Cemetery Directory told us that those letters stand for “Chevalier” which means Knight in French. He was a musician who helped in the fight to establish the Kingdom of Italy. He also served as court musician to Emperor Maximilian in Mexico. He went to San Francisco, where he endured the great earthquake and fire. He ended up in Seattle teaching piano. His gravestone is a simple marker, even simpler than most others. All the achievements that he accomplished meant

nothing in the end. What mattered was what he did for love of Christ.

When Christ comes again, he will come from the east like the rising dawn and gather his people to himself. All of the graves face the east so that they will be ready to greet the Lord when he comes. Their bodies will be re-united to their soul and he will take them with him to his heavenly Kingdom. It is a wonderful thought to contemplate, all those people of faith standing upright in their graves facing the rising dawn of new life.

Jesus tells us today, “Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is here.”

The first readings reference to the Archangel Michael is a reminder that before Christ gathers his people, we will be judged. We will be judged on whether or not we have allowed Christ’s teachings to direct and guide our behavior. We will be judged on our generosity, our willingness to listen to the Lord and what we have done for love of Him. But most of all we will be judged on whether or not we helped others come to a deeper love of God’s Kingdom. Have we helped our children and family understand the gift of Salvation or have we led them away?

We will be judged, but for the faithful, there is no reason to fear the judgment. The signs are very clear. We have been taught the language of right living. The purpose and the meaning of life has been set before us, there is no need to guess or wonder how to live. All we have to do is choose holiness, choose to know Jesus.

We know what sin is. Choose what is good. We know what selfishness is. Choose to be generous. We know what hurts others; choose to love.

Christ teaches us. His Church guides us. The Sacraments heal us and give strength. He has set everything before us so that we will not be lost.

There is a movie that is just coming out called 2012. It's about the end of the world which the Mayan calendar predicts will occur in 2012. I want to build a church here someday, but I think I will wait till after 2012, just in case.

Many people are filled with anxiety over these predictions from dead religions or from silly prophecies from people like Nostradamus. They worry and are anxious about all kinds of spiritual things, but they ignore source of all spirituality, Christ himself, who has already told us all we need to know.

This week Jesus tells us that no one knows the time or the place when God will come for us. That Cemetery and the names on these banners are a clear reminder of that truth.

People think that we go to church to get something out of it, to feel good or to have some kind of therapeutic experience. But that is not the purpose for coming to Mass.

What we do here each week is a dress rehearsal for that time when Jesus comes for us. It is all about choosing to be a part of God's people. We come **together** here, because we will be **together** in God's Kingdom. We **give ourselves** in worship because God's Kingdom is all about **hearts that are giving**. We **respond** to God's invitation and listen to Christ's words because heaven is all about **listening and responding** like people in love. We **give**

thanks and encourage one another here because that is the pattern for everlasting life with Christ.

If we are annoyed by Christ's teachings here, why would we want to be with him in eternity? If we are resentful of an hour with God's people once a week here, how could we stand to be with them forever?

This generation is passing away. We will all die. Not one of us knows the day or the hour.

But this should not be a cause of fear or anxiety. Christ has given us all that we need to prepare for that day when Michael the great Prince will arise and call our names.

Will our names be written in his book? Christ came to offer us the book of life; he has given us a pen with which to write our names in that book, it is the Sacramental life of the Church. But we write our names letter by letter as we respond to His teaching.

When we are generous to the poor, we write a portion of our name in the Book of Life. When we support the work of the Church, we write a portion of our name in the Book of Life. When we build in our hearts a desire for heaven, we write a portion of our name in the Book of Life. When we practice the way of forgiveness and love, we write our name in the book of life.

The Mayan calendar can't help us. Dead religions can't help us; that's why they are dead. Only God who created us for Himself and longs for our love can offer a remedy for our troubled and anxious hearts and souls. He does this through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, by which He gives us spiritual healing and peace. He heals us though the Eucharist, the gift of Christ's love which binds

us together with the communion of Saints our true family, and our true home.

We will sin and fall from time to time, but that is not what Christ is interested in. He is interested in our desire to begin again, our desire to seek forgiveness, and our desire to fight sin and seek holiness.

For those 8th graders, the cemetery was not a place of fear or creepiness. It was a place of wonder and hope. It held the hope that Christ will be true to his promise and that he has taken every means to mark our path to heaven. That Cemetery was a reminder that heaven is within our grasp. No matter when the world may end, we have nothing to fear from it.