

**Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time– Year B**

**November 4, 2018**

**Christ the Good Shepherd, ORCC**

**Reflection by Father Charles Blanchard**

First Reading: Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Psalm: 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51(2)

Second Reading: Hebrews 7:23-28

Gospel: Mark: 12:28-34

Welcome to Christ the Good Shepherd. It's exciting to see so many people of divergent backgrounds who have decided to come here; to pray; to sing; and to affirm common ground. A common ground created out of Catholic ritual, tradition and history, and yet applied, in a new and creative way where all are welcome to hear God's Word and feast at this table where there is no partiality.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Here we are at the end of this Church Year once again. Next Sunday is Christ the King and then we enter into Advent. Today the readings direct our attention to the end of time. We are promised that if we are faithful, we shall not be destroyed. We are promised that the Archangel Michael will be there helping us. We are told that the one great sacrifice for sins has been made and we must cling to the Lord. God will gather His elect and we must be ready.

Many people live in fear of the end of the world, the end of time, the great gathering of people by the Lord God. It is awesome to think that one day we shall all be gathered to the Lord with all who have gone before us and those who many come after us. The fear comes because there is always the possibility that I will not be counted among those who are chosen.

The first reading today is from the Book of Daniel tells us: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace.” This is the kind of statement that makes us have a bit of fear. We hope that we shall be along those who shall live forever.

If we look at Scripture as a whole, this possibility of hell, of being rejected, is always there. On the other hand, it is never the great focus of the Scripture. The focus of Scripture is God’s everlasting love for us; God’s desire that all be saved; God’s walking with us to lead us in the path of salvation. While we should always be aware of our capacity to reject God and to reject the ways of God, we should be more aware of God’s love for us and should try to respond to that love. God invites us to know His love, His saving power, His delight in us.

The second reading is from the Letter to the Hebrews. The point of this selection today is to remind us that any human high priest cannot make a complete amendment for our sins. Neither you nor I can atone completely for our sins. It takes Jesus, who is God and man, to make the one sacrifice for sins that never needs to be repeated. Sin is vanquished in Christ Jesus. On the other hand, sin is us is only overcome when we become one with Jesus Christ. God truly loves us and sends His Own Son to take away sin so that we can live forever with God.

The Gospel from Mark is also about the final coming of the Lord and is clear that no one knows the day or the hour. How often we hear predictions based on Scripture about when the end of the world will happen. We should always listen politely and in our hearts listen to the words of the Lord: “But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

The challenge is not to know when the end is coming but to live today as if the end will be right now. There is no sense in pretending with God. God knows our hearts and our minds, even more than we do. We must simply get on with living now as if this is our last moment—with no fear and no upset, completely trusting in the love of the Lord. Thank you for effecting positive change in people’s lives and making anew God’s Peace and Love in this world!

Gracias de Dios para todos; God’s grace be with all of us! Amen