

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B (2021)

Nobody likes to hear a long, boring story. It's not a fun experience. And yet, we all have people in our lives who—once they start a story— can't seem to finish it.

Fr. Lieu is like that. Sometime when I listen to one of his stories, he seems to have no intention of stopping, until I tell him, “Just get to the ending!”

Endings matter—in all areas of our lives. And some of us, well, that's pretty much all we care about.

If we want to see a movie, we want someone to tell them how it “turns out”. Some of us quickly check the scores of games in the 4th quarter or the 9th inning, because, why “waste” time watching the actual game. Some of us start reading a mystery novel, quickly lose interest, and flip to the end to see who the killer was. Yes, endings matter.

A young boy was concerned, like a lot of other people looking out on a world of ransacked grocery stores and canceled sports seasons and eerie lines of people standing six feet apart from one another. So, he asked his dad: “Is this the end of the world?”

His father replied, no, it's not the end of the world, but it is a God-given opportunity to reflect on what will happen. When we see everything going wrong around us, I believe it is God testing us—to see how we respond to calamity and hardship.” “[because] If we're shaken now, how are we going to react when things really get wild?”

One of the great “appeals” of early Christianity was that Jesus had risen from the dead. The Resurrection was tangible, visible, and concrete “evidence” that the “ending” had changed.

No longer was life a meaningless chore as God himself revealed to Adam, “by the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken.” Gen 3:19

The Resurrection unveiled a new ending, a new eternal reality—something new for which to hope, and two thousand years later, we are still holding on.

Yes, from time to time, we still wonder about how this will all come to an end, how God will bring about the fulfillment of his plan for all of creation; however, the “how” and the “what” of the “end” doesn’t keep many of us up at night. Instead, we are anxious about the “when”.

And get this, the ending that concerns us most, isn’t the “darkening of the sun or the stars falling from the sky”—it’s the ending of our lives.

Isn’t that, as we say, the \$64,000 question? Most of us want to have some idea of how long we will live, some idea of how much time we have left.

And some of that “wanting to know” is simply for practical purposes—to get our affairs in order, to pursue certain careers, to marry or not, to have children or not.

But mostly, we want to know, so that we could make the changes we need to make.

To reconcile with those from whom we are estranged. To give more money to worthy causes. To say the things, we need to say to our spouses and children. To seek forgiveness from those we have wronged. To be more patient, and kinder, more compassionate, and more understanding.

When Jesus says, “But of that day or hour, no one knows,” he is certainly referring to his return at the end of time. But in a certain sense, he’s also referring to the end of our earthly existence.

Psalm 90 comes to mind, seventy is the sum of our years, or eighty, if we are strong, and most of these are toil and sorrow; they pass quickly, and we are gone.

And so, the wisest thing to do, the prudent thing to do, the truly faithful thing to do is to make the changes in our lives that need to be made right now.

Because you see none of us can go back and change the beginning, but we can start where we are and change the ending.