

33rd Sunday- B 2009

Daniel 12: 1-3; Hebrews 10: 11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/readings/111509.shtml>

What we heard today can be scary. If you are scared, don't be.

But, if you're not scared, why not?

The book of Daniel and this chapter of Mark are works of apocalyptic literature. This type of writing is about the "last things" at the end of the world and often takes the form of visions with complex symbolism.

Some Christian denominations understand these writings literally. The recent Left Behind series written by LeHay and Jenkins have taken that literal understanding and wrapped around it a cast of God-seeking characters who were left behind after the Rapture.

Most Catholic Scripture scholars do not take the literalist perspective on apocalyptic literature. It is to be understood through analogy or metaphor. Words are employed to carry great and profound meaning ... divine meaning. But the Divine...God...is without limits while words function only because they have limits. They describe by delineating. We understand "yellow" because it is not violet, blue, green, orange or red. And yet human imagination can beautifully string together words that do point us to that which is beyond us.

So when we hear about the darkened sun, the lightless moon, falling stars and shaken heavens we are asked to search the metaphor for deeper meaning. What sometimes happens though, in the attempt, is that we are satisfied with an interpretation that turns out to be less powerful than the words presented.

If our words are inadequate to describe the divine, caution should be exercised when we interpret those words with less power than their literal sense. We should engage our imagination to go beyond those words and stretch our minds and souls around the Greater, to whom they point.

So do not explain away the power of these apocalyptic readings. They are pointing at something cosmic.

I just saw the movie *2012*. That is the year that an ancient Mayan calendar predicted as the end of the world. Cinematic technology brought scenes of earthquakes, cities dropping into canyons, mountain ranges leveled and great tsunamis, all with surround sound. It was all pretty cool, scary and intimidating.

But in our readings today, Daniel and Mark are talking about a cosmic event that trumps the scenes of this movie. We should be intimidated by the power of their words. These words may not be literally intended, but what they point to is greater than their literal meaning. We should employ awe in embracing them.

So what could be greater, more awesome or more unfathomable than a darkened sun and stars falling out of the sky?

It is God's love for you.

Scientists tell us that at the current rate of fusion activity, our Sun will burn out in 4-5 billion years.

Do you realize that you will outlast our sun?

You are more significant than the sun, the moon and the stars. God made you to be with him for all eternity.

The birth of a baby is bigger than the birth of a star. I know of no other way of bringing eternal souls into the universe than through the love of a man and a woman.

And even though we will be with Him forever, God could not wait to become one with us. He put on our flesh to share his very self with us on this speck of a planet on the edge of the Milky Way. He sent us his Spirit to guide us, and promised to never leave us. He makes himself present to us here and now in Eucharist where we are fed by his body ... to become his body.

If you can embrace this, you are discovering something that is more real than cinematic special effects and grander than apocalyptic visions.

If these visions don't challenge you to embrace the eternal relationship that God is offering you, maybe you should be scared.

But if you are scared, remember Jesus said do not be afraid. His one sacrifice made perfect forever we who are being consecrated. He did it all for you, for eternity.