

November 18th, 2018, 33rd Week in Ordinary Time, Daniel 12:1-3, Hebrews 10:11-14, 18,

Mark 13:24-32

Change today is faster than ever before. Even the rate of change is changing, and it's as if all that we are familiar with is passing away. Whereas, Jesus tells us in the Gospel today that heaven and earth will pass away but that His words will not pass away. What does this mean?

There are eternal truths that Jesus has revealed to us through His Church that do not "pass away". They *do not* change. Jesus, the Divine Word, provides us, through Scripture and Tradition, with the moral compass that has guided His Church and human achievement for over 2000 years. The eternal Truths that are woven into our Sacred Traditions and read in Sacred Scripture are the beacons that light our way in a troubled and sinful world; they are the beacons that guide the ship of our lives into the safe harbor of heaven. This is consoling to me as I'm sure it is to you.

Jesus also tells us in the Gospel today that only the Father knows the hour of His return and that the elect will be gathered. What does this mean for us? In Matthew's Gospel, similar to today's Gospel, Jesus tells the story of the ten virgins, who are waiting into the night for the return of the bridegroom. Each had an oil lantern to light their way. Five virgins realized that they didn't have enough oil so they asked the five prepared virgins who did have enough oil for some of theirs. But, the five prepared virgins refused because if they gave their oil away they would not have enough for their own lamps. First, this is not a story about being stingy or about the need of sharing! Instead, the lamp oil represents Faith. The lesson is that we each have to have our own "oil of Faith." Faith cannot be borrowed like money. We can "share our Faith" with someone in the sense of sharing our experiences, but a person's Faith has to be their own. Jesus said, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be open to *you*." Jesus is telling us that we need to live in faith and live out *our* faith each day!

The Church teaches us that the Theological gift of Faith comes primarily through Baptism and Eucharist. We become children of God through the grace of Baptism and receive the light of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. During the Baptismal Rite the minister says, "Parents and Godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. This child of yours has been enlightened by Christ. He (she) is to walk always as a child of the light. May he (she) keep the flame of faith alive in his (her) heart. When the Lord comes, may he (she) go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom."

We need God's grace, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of Faith to keep the light of Christ burning brightly, until the Lord comes again or "we go out to meet Him." This grace comes to us in many forms in addition to Baptism. We receive the grace of Christ, Himself, in the Eucharist; in Confirmation the gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of forgiveness in Confession, and other means of grace

in the other sacraments. Strengthening of our Faith also comes through prayer, reading of Sacred Scripture, offering ourselves to the Lord in love and service during our day, and sharing our Faith with others.

*Sharing our Faith – being **witnesses** to our Faith* is our Baptismal calling. Jesus said to us that no one lights a lamp and then proceeds to put it under a basket. I attended the Evangelical Catholic event on Thursday evening to hear about the practical tools of sharing a one's Faith. Interestingly, it turns out that the best way to evangelize is to be prepared to share our Faith story... in 30 seconds or less, no pressure! The point is that we have to be ready and able to **witness** to our Faith (1 Peter 3:15, "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.")

Once I was working on a construction site and I shared my faith with one of my fellow worker and his response was, "Don't impose your morality on me!" Now to my ears that sounded kind of funny because to me that's like saying, 'don't impose your ice cream on me,' because it a very good thing, right? If you've got ice cream, plenty of ice cream, with chocolate syrup, the natural response is you want to share it with your friends so you can *all* enjoy it...

Young people, you are an important part of our Church today and you are the Church of tomorrow. We need you to carry the message of the Gospel wherever and however God is calling you to live your life. Jesus, before asking you to follow Him, looks upon you with love, just as He does on each of us gathered here today. It is His love that compels us to journey with Him as Christians. Faith in Jesus Christ is what brings joy and happiness to our lives, so let us say yes to following Jesus and His Church. Will you say yes to Jesus?

Our patron, Saint Cecilia, the patron of musicians, virgin (for the sake of the kingdom) and martyr, whose feast we celebrate this weekend, lived in the 3rd century. She was martyred for simply being a Christian. Martyr is the Greek word for **witness**. Saint Cecilia, virgin and "witness", speaks to the conviction of her calling to virginity and a courageous Christian faith that was willing to die rather than to deny. She is a great model for us. St. Cecilia, pray for us!

As we enter into the Eucharistic celebration today. It is Jesus who we receive. Love, Himself... His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, that enters into our bodies and feeds our souls. Jesus says in John's Gospel Chapter 17 vs. 26, "I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them." It is His very Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity that feeds our souls in the Eucharist. It is He who gives us courage, and it is His very life and love that compels us to stand with conviction in our Faith and to share our Faith with others.

Dn. Charles Bernhardt, in Celebration of the Feast of St. Cecilia, November 22, 2018