

17 November 2024 - 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday "B"

[Dan 12:1-3; Heb 10:11...18; Mk 13:24-32](#)

### Homily

At the time when the evangelist Mark was composing his Gospel and recounting the words of Jesus that we have just heard, the world was full of conflict, war and oppression. The great powers were waging war against each other, often by proxy, and the oppressors claimed to be acting on a divine mission. The future of entire peoples was sacrificed to the proud ambitions of powers intoxicated by their supremacy. In reality, it was little different from the situation today. Just think of the war in Yemen, which has been going on for years, or what the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip or the people of Ukraine are going through.

It is important to note that Mark's account comprises two very different and complementary paragraphs; and that, if we take them as a whole, his message to us is one of hope. Only a superficial or fundamentalist reading could see it as an announcement of 'the end of the world'.

The Evangelist Mark uses the symbolic language of the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament (Jeremiah 8:2; Ezekiel 8:16, for example), in which the sun and moon represented pagan divinities. The stars and celestial powers represented the leaders of the nations who claimed to be gods in order to oppress the peoples and who themselves were considered to be gods. Several texts by the great prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) described the fall of these empires as a cosmic catastrophe. Jesus uses the same poetic and imaginative language in today's Gospel.

The way in which Mark reported these words of Jesus several years later encouraged the first Christians to continue to fight faithfully in the world of misfortune in which they found themselves. The message was that all these so-called 'powers' would eventually fall. Only the kingdom of love and brotherhood established by the Son of Man will last forever. We are all familiar with the ambiguity - intentional - of the expression 'Son of Man', which designates first of all the human being as a whole and then, in a particular way, the Son of Man par excellence, that is, the Son of God made man. The statement that the 'Son of Man' will appear in his glory is the announcement of the victory of the *human* (fully realised in Jesus of Nazareth) over *inhumanity*. This 'Son of Man' par excellence has already come, but he was killed. Now he is coming back through all his disciples who, like Him and in His name, carry His message to the four corners of the

world. Many of His disciples have suffered or will suffer the same fate as He did. They are His witnesses (His "martyrs"). That is the message of this text.

Because His message has reached every corner of the earth, the Son of Man sends His messengers to gather the elect from the four corners of the world. He alone can bring about a 'globalisation' that is not the hegemony of the strong over the weak, for the weak and the little ones are His privileged ones.

If the first part of this Gospel story speaks of the fall of the potentates and the end of a world of oppression (and not of the end of the world), the second part, filled with the freshness of new life, describes the new world - the one that Jesus began to create and that He has given us the responsibility of completing here on earth. This text describes this new world in the delicate image of a fig tree whose branches become tender in spring and whose leaves begin to come out.

The generation of Jesus was that of Israel's second exodus. Like those of the first exodus, they were still waiting for a Messiah who would finally give them supremacy over all the pagan peoples. Jesus tells them that 'before this generation is over', all these false hopes will be destroyed forever by the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. The same thing will happen sooner or later to all the oppressive powers over the centuries, at an hour known only to God.

The message of this Gospel is full of hope. It also contains a mission. Our mission as Christians is to hasten the full advent of the Son of Man, the full humanisation of society, by living the Gospel. Then, breaking down all the separations that we have established between ourselves and that give rise to 'our wars', the 'Son of Man' will gather together the chosen ones 'from the four corners of the earth, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven'. It would then be quite wrong to speak of 'the end of the world', because, insofar as this world will be a world of love, it will never end. -- would God want to destroy what He Himself created out of love? - The only fear we should have is that of not loving enough.

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