

Last Sunday after Pentecost
(From 24th and Last Sunday of Pentecost)
26 November 2017

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, Possess the kingdom prepared for you...." Mt. 35:40

In his book of meditations on the liturgy, *Divine Intimacy*, Fr. Gabriel of St. Magdalen, OCD. comments: "The Mass for today, the last Sunday of the liturgical year is a prayer of thanksgiving for the year that is ending and one of propitiation for that which is about to begin; it is a reminder that the present life is fleeting, and an invitation to keep ourselves in readiness for the final step which will usher us into eternity...With the description of the end of the world and the coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead, the Gospel (Mt. 24:13-25) reminds us that just as the liturgical year comes to an end, so does the life of man on earth. Everything will have an end, and at the end of all, will come the majestic epilogue: *"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven [the Cross]; and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty."* (Mt. 24:30) Fr. Gabriel, p. 1100-1 In today's *Epistle* (Col. 1:9-14), St. Paul shows us how we can be assured of a place in the heavenly kingdom at the end of the world if we live according to God's will: *"We ... cease not to pray for you and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will ... that you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing; being fruitful in every good work,"* Col. 1:9-10

Eternal Glory in Heaven

Fr. Gabriel tells us about the importance of today's *Epistle* for the attainment of eternal glory in heaven: "This is a beautiful synthesis of the task which the interior soul has endeavoured to accomplish during the whole year: to adapt and conform itself to God's holy will, to unite itself to it completely, and, being moved in all things by that divine will alone, to act in such a manner as to please Our Lord in everything. God be praised if, thanks to His help, we have succeeded in advancing some steps along the road which most surely leads to holiness. Making our own the sentiments of the Apostle, we should give thanks to *"the Father who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light."*

(Col 1:12) The lot, the inheritance of the saints, of those who tend toward holiness, is union of love with God-- here below in faith, hereafter in glory. This heritage is ours because Jesus merited it for us by His Blood, and because in Jesus *"we have redemption, the remission of sins"* (Col. 1:14); thus, cleansed from sin and clothed in grace by His infinite merits, we also can ascend to that very lofty and blessed state of union with God." Fr. Gabriel, p. 1100

The Fall of Jerusalem and the End of the World

In today's Gospel, Jesus foretells two of the most catastrophic events to happen to mankind. By juxtaposing the Fall of Jerusalem (70 AD) with the End of the World, Jesus warns us to be ready for what will befall our world. When Jesus prophesied *"When, therefore, you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: he that readeth let him understand. Then they are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains."* Mt. 24:15-6 Cornelius A Lapide in his *Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel* comments on this scriptural text, especially in relation to Fall of Jerusalem: "Some understand by it an idol placed in the temple as God; others, the sins committed by priests in the temple; others, more correctly, the Roman armies which besieged Jerusalem, and which, shortly afterward, when it had been captured, fearfully wasted it, and made it desolate. It could also mean the profanation of the temple by the murders and other crimes which were perpetuated in it by the seditious killers and wicked Jews, who call themselves Zealots of the law and of liberty." A Lapide, p. 423. No wonder Jesus prophesied as A Lapide points out: *"For there shall be then great tribulation (Jerusalem and all Judea because of the divine vengeance as is clear from Lk. 21:33), such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be."* (Mt. 24:21) A Lapide, p. 427

Jerusalem's Catastrophic Fate

The Fall of Jerusalem was going to be the most catastrophic event to befall a nation in the entire history of the world. It is a reminder of the great price that needed to be paid for the

deicide of Jesus Christ. It is also a foreshadowing of the greater events which will happen at the end of the world. Cornelius A Lapide says: **“This most dreadful destruction of Jerusalem was an express type and prelude of the end of the world, just as Noe’s deluge, the burning of Sodom, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his entire army in the Red Sea....Christ, therefore, compares the destruction of the one nation of the Jews with that of any other nation whatsoever, but not the destruction of all nations, or the whole world. That this was the case, is plain from the seven books which Josephus compiled (*de Bello Judaico*). Thus he says expressly (lib. 6 cap.11) ‘to speak briefly, I am of opinion that no other city suffered calamities, nor in any other nation of which there is memory among men was the wickedness of seditious more ferocious... (lib 7, cap. 18) The number of those who perished surpasses that of any calamity, whether human or of divine origin; of whom some were killed outright, and some were carried off by the Romans.’ ...Hence Josephus (lib. 7 *Belli* c. 17) asserts that besides innumerable others slain in all parts of Judea, there fell in the siege of Jerusalem alone 1,100,000 souls, who died of famine, pestilence and the sword. ...The same writer says that 97,000 Jews were taken captive at that time.... ‘For these are the days of vengeance (i.e., for the death of Christ)... There will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.’ (Lk. 21:22) Josephus adds (lib. 7 *Belli* c. 16) that Titus (the Roman General) recognized this vengeance of God, and attributed the capture of Jerusalem, not to his own power, but to Him. For entering into the captured city, when he saw the height and solidity of the bulwarks and towers, he exclaimed, ‘It is evident that God has helped us to fight. It was God Himself who cast down the Jews from those fortifications. For what power of man, or what machines, would have been able to do so?’ The same Josephus (lib. 6 *Belli* cap. 14) adds, and Eusebius cites him (lib. 3 *Hist.* cap. 5) that ‘Titus went round, and saw the ditches full of corpses of the dead, he groaned aloud, and lifting up his hands to heaven, called God to witness that it was not his work.’” A Lapide, p. 424-8**

“...the sun shall be darkened and moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and powers of heaven shall be moved.” Mt. 24:29

Cornelius A Lapide quotes the allegorical meaning of this passage from St. Augustine (*epist. 80 at Hesychium*): **“The sun, that is, the Church, shall be darkened, because in those tremendous tribulations and temptations which shall be in the end of the world, many who had seemed as bright and as firm as the sun and the stars shall fall away from the Faith and a state of grace.”** p. 441. Cornelius A Lapide gives a more literal and symbolic explanation of this passage: **“...the sun will be darkened because God will withhold His concurrence and take away from it, not its light, but its power of illuminating and of scattering its rays; thus it shall come to pass that in the sun there will be light, but upon the earth nothing but darkness, as it happened during the passion of Christ, so as to manifest the indignity which He suffered, since the sun, the moon, the earth and rocks and all the elements seemed to mourn, indeed grow indignant....”** A Lapide, p.441-2

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn...” Mt. 24:30

Cornelius A Lapide quoting St. Augustine (*serm. 130 de Tempore*) tells us of the power of Christ’s Cross: **“Hast thou considered how great is the virtue of the Sign of the Cross? The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light; but the cross shall shine and shall obscure the heavenly luminaries. When the stars shall fall, it alone shall send forth radiance, that thou mayest learn how the cross is more luminous than the moon and more glorious than the sun, because illuminated by the brilliance of divine light, it shall surpass their splendour. For just as when a king enters into a city, his soldiers go before him, bearing upon their shoulders the royal arms and standards, and all the pomp of military array, to proclaim the monarch’s entry; so when the Lord descends from heaven, the angel hosts shall go before Him, bearing upon their lofty shoulders that sign which is the ensign of triumph, to announce to the inhabitants of earth the divine**

entrance of the heavenly King... But why will the cross appear then? That they might understand the mystery of iniquity (cf. II Thess. 2:7). *'And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.'* (Mt. 24:30) That is, many of every tribe, that is, all the reprobate and the damned shall mourn, because they have neglected their salvation, which cost Christ so dearly that he was crucified. But the elect will rejoice and sing, because they will see that they have been saved and blessed by the cross. The distribution (of rewards), then, is to each according to his kind, and not to (predetermined) categories of individuals as logicians put it. S. Augustine (*serm. 130 de Tempore*) gives the cause of weeping, ... because they shall see their accuser, that is, the cross itself; and at the sight of this reprover they shall acknowledge their sin. Too late, and in vain shall they confess their impious blindness. And dost thou marvel that when Christ cometh He will bring His cross, since He will show His wounds also?" A Lapide, p. 446

"And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty." Mt. 24:30b

Cornelius A Lapide comments of the power of Jesus at this His Second Coming: **"In Greek, 'with great strength and glory', Lk. 21:27 'with great power'. For as Christ as His first advent came into the world in great infirmity of the flesh, in poverty and contempt, so He hath thereby merited to come in His second advent with great strength, glory and majesty. His might and strength shall appear, in that at His command all the dead shall rise in a moment; in that all men, angels, and devils shall behold and worship Him as their God, their Lord, and their Judge; in that He shall pass sentence upon all according to their merits, and shall execute His sentence, so that none shall dare to contradict or resist it. His majesty shall appear in the infinite splendour of His body, in the multitude and brightness of all the angels accompanying Him, and in His garments of radiant clouds, also in the trumpets, thunder, lightning, earthquakes, etc., that shall precede Him..."** A Lapide, p. 448

Confidence in God's Love

St. Teresa of Avila gives us a confidence that, if we have loved God in this world we should have no fear of death nor God's judgment: **"Deign, O Lord, to grant me the experience of true love before You take me from this life, for it will be a great thing at the hour of my death to realize that I shall be judged by One whom I have loved above all things. I shall be able to meet You with security, certain that I shall not be going into a foreign land, but into my own country, for it belongs to the One whom I have loved so truly and who has loved me in return. How sweet will be the death of that soul who has done penance for all its sins and does not have to go to purgatory! It may be that it will begin to enjoy glory even in this world, and will know no fear, but only peace!"** St. Jose Maria Escriva, *The Way*, 40

Addendum: for your spiritual life!

"...regaining lost joy ..."

A Good Confession

If we want to regain some of the lost joy which we should have in this world when we think of our heavenly home then we need to make a good confession of our sins. Pope John Paul in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliation and Penance*, (2 December, 1984, 31, III) tells us that every contrite confession is **"a drawing near to the holiness of God, a rediscovery of one's true identity, which has been upset and disturbed by sin, a liberation in the very depths of one's self and thus a regaining of lost joy, the joy of being saved, which the majority of people in our time are no longer capable of experiencing."**