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Year 27 No. 5 Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (A) — White December 1, 2023

PREPARING FOR THE END TIMES

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The end of the world is one of the most speculated subjects. Movies have been made about it. Particular persons belonging to various sects and religions at different centuries prophesied and set dates for it, imparting an anxiousness that matches the words of the Gospel: "People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Lk 21:26).

Our liturgy these past days speaks about the "end." It offers images of destruction and war, persecution and fearful signs in the heavenly bodies as well as in the sea: *"When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not immediately be the end… Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues from place to place; and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky... There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves"* (Lk 21:9-11, 25).

Why are we presented this kind of reading? It has been a week now that we are hearing things that will take place before the coming of "the Ancient One" (First Reading) and the "reign of God" (Gospel). The writing in Daniel and the tone of our Gospel point to apocalyptic language (Latin: *apocalypsis*)—the unfolding of things not previously known. It offers a glimpse of the end times as revealed to the visionary. Apocalyptic writings are actually resistance literature during certain experiences of persecution. For example, the prophet Daniel was writing to encourage the persecuted Jews during the time of Antiochus IV (167-164 BCE). Antiochus imposed upon Israel the Greek culture that tried to force Jews under pain of death to abandon their own religious tradition. Daniel predicts the deliverance and the coming glory of the suffering people of God. Luke, on the other hand, presents Jesus foretelling the fall of Jerusalem and the imminent trials of the disciples. Jesus exhorts them to patient endurance (Lk 21:19), to read the signs of the times—*"Consider the fig tree and all the other trees. When their buds burst open, you see for yourselves and know that summer is now near; in the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near"* (Lk 21:29-31); to keep vigilant and to constantly pray (Lk 21:36).

The Church finds our readings appropriate for the closing of the liturgical year. In a way, we are in that mood of ending. Today is Friday of the Thirty-Fourth Week in Ordinary Time—the last week of the liturgical year. Soon we will begin the season of Advent where the mood focuses more on the preparation for the coming of Jesus, both Christmas and at his second coming. The readings then accompany very well the end of the liturgical year where we are invited to look back at how we have journeyed with it—and especially how it has made us closer to Jesus amidst the challenges of life—so that we may better prepare ourselves for Christ at his coming. Most of us are familiar with the external signs we do in preparation for Christmas: Simbang Gabi, Christmas tree, Christmas parties, reunions, exchange gifts, etc. The readings that focus on the "end" make us reflect on the temporality of this life. Even our trials have its destined end. The Gospel stresses on the one that will truly last—the words of Jesus. *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"* (Lk 21:33).

The readings therefore do not announce an "end" the way doomsday preachers do. We are instead invited to make ourselves always ready to encounter Christ, to hold on to his words, and to say with the conviction of Peter, especially during times of trials and difficulties: *"Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life"* (Jn 6:68).

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon
(Cf. Ps 33 (32):11, 19)
(Recited when there is no opening song.)

The designs of his Heart are from age to age, to rescue their souls from death and to keep them alive in famine.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.

Introduction
(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P—The readings for today lead us to reflect about the end times. As Christians, we deeply long for that "Thy Kingdom come" to happen. But we are not certain when it will happen. Thus our faith must be characterized by wakefulness and readiness so that we may not be distracted by the lures of this passing world. Are we really focused and ready to welcome the final breaking forth of God's Kingdom?

Penitential Act

P—Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. *(Pause)*

P—You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Kyrie, eleison.
All—Kyrie, eleison.

P—You came to call sinners: Christe, eleison.
All—Christe, eleison.

P—You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Kyrie, eleison.
All—Kyrie, eleison.

P—May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All—Amen.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Clothe us, Lord God, with the virtues of the Heart of your Son and set us aflame with his love, that, conformed to his image, we may merit a share in eternal redemption.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading (Dn 7:2-14) *(Sit)*

The prophet Daniel's vision of One like a son of man overcoming the terrifying powers of the world encourages us to take to heart God's promise of salvation.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Daniel

IN A VISION I, Daniel, saw during the night, the four winds of heaven stirred up the great sea, from which emerged four immense beasts, each dif ferent from the others. The first was like a lion, but with eagle's wings. While I watched, the wings were plucked; it was raised from the ground to stand on two feet like a man, and given a human mind. The second was like a bear; it was raised up on one side, and among the teeth in its mouth were three tusks. It was given the order, "Up, devour much flesh." After this I looked and saw another beast, like a leopard; on its back were four wings like those of a bird, and it had four heads. To this beast dominion was given. After this, in the visions of the night I saw the fourth beast, different from all the others, terrifying, horrible, and of extraordinary strength; it had great iron teeth with which it devoured and cr ushed, and what was left it trampled with its feet. I was considering the ten horns it had, when suddenly another, a little horn, sprang out of their midst, and three of the previous horns were torn away to make room for it. This horn had eyes like a man, and a mouth that spoke arrogantly. As I watched, thrones were set up and the Ancient One took his throne. His clothing was snow bright, and the hair on his head as white as wool; his throne was flames of fire, with wheels of burning fire. A surging stream of fire flowed out from where he sat; thousands upon thousands were ministering to him, and myriads upon myriads attended him.

The court was convened, and the books were opened. I watched, then, from the first of the arrogant words which the horn spoke, until the beast was slain and its body thrown into the fire to be burnt up. The other beasts, which also lost their dominion, were granted a prolongation of life for a time and a season. As the visions during the night continued, I saw One like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, he received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of ever y language ser ve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.

—The word of the Lord.
All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Dn 3)

R—Give glory and eternal praise to him!

1. "Mountains and hills, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." **(R)**

2. "Ever ything growing from the earth, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." **(R)**

3. "You springs, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." **(R)**

4. "Seas and rivers, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." **(R)**

5. "You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." **(R)**

6. "All you birds of the air, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." **(R)**

7. "All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord; praise and exalt him above all forever." **(R)**

Verse before the Gospel
(Lk 21:28) *(Stand)*

All—Alleluia, alleluia. Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Lk 21:29-33)

P—A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke
All—Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS told his disciples a parable. "Consider the fig tree and all the other trees. When their buds burst open, you see for yourselves and know that summer is now near; in the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and ear th will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

—The Gospel of the Lord.
All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily *(Sit)*

Prayer of the Faithful

P—The budding of trees marks the end of winter and the coming of spring and summer. It also symbolizes the end of troubles and trials. Let us learn from nature not to lose hope. For every petition, we say:
R—Lord, hear our prayer.

C—May we learn from the cycle of nature that darkness gives way to light, that winter turns to spring and summer, and so believe that the Lord will turn our sorrow into joy. We pray. **(R)**

C—May we hold on through the night of life's trials, for joy comes in the morning. We pray: **(R)**

C—May we encourage the feeble of heart, help people to rise from their knees, and share our faith and joy with the hopeless. We pray: **(R)**

C—May our departed family members, friends, and benefactors enjoy the peace of Paradise that Jesus procured by his death and resurrection. We pray: **(R)**

C—Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions *(pause)*. We pray: **(R)**

P—Almighty God, in time you will make all things new. Help us to hold on to you in moments of doubt and darkness, so that we can raise our heads to welcome your redemption. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts *(Stand)*

P—Pray, brethren…
All—May the Lord accept accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glor y of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P—O God, Father of mercies, who, because of the great love with which you loved us, with untold goodness gave us your Only Begotten Son, grant, we pray, that, being per fectly united with him, we may offer you worthy homage.
Through Christ our Lord.
All—Amen.

Preface
(The Boundless Charity of Christ)

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.
P—Lift up your hearts.
All—We lift them up to the Lord.
P—Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All—It is right and just.

P—It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and ever ywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.
For raised up high on the Cross, he gave himself up for us with a wonderful love and poured out Blood and water from his pierced side, the wellspring of the Church's Sacraments, so that, won over to the open Heart of the Savior, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.
And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we praise you, as without end we acclaim:
All—Holy, Holy, Holy... *(Kneel)*

Acclamation *(Stand)*

All—Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All—Our Father…
P—Deliver us, Lord…
All—For the kingdom...

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion *(Kneel)*

P—Behold the Lamb of God...
All—Lord, I am not worthythat you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon
(Cf. Jn 19:34)

One of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and at once there came forth blood and water.

Prayer after Communion *(Stand)*

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*
Made partakers in your Sacrament of charity, we humbly implore your mercy, Lord, that we may be conformed to Christ on earth and merit to be coheirs of his glory in heaven.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
All—Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P—The Lord be with you.
All—And with your spirit.

P—And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (✝) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
All—Amen.

Dismissal

P—Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
All—Thanks be to God.

PRAYER TO THE

SACRED HEART *of Jesus*

Divine Jesus, you have said, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," behold me kneeling at your feet, filled with a lively faith and confidence in the promises dictated by your Sacred Heart and pronounced by your adorable lips. I come to ask this favor: *(Here silently mention your petition/s)*.

To whom can I turn if not to you whose Heart is the source of all graces and merits? Where should I seek if not in the treasure which contains all the riches of your kindness and mercy? Where should I knock if not at the door through which God gives himself to us and through which we go to God? I have recourse to you, Heart of Jesus. In you I find consolation when afflicted, protection when persecuted, strength when burdened with trials, and light in doubt and darkness.

Dear Jesus, I firmly believe that you can grant me the grace I implore, even though it should require a miracle. You have only to will it, and my prayer will be granted. I admit that I am most unworthy of your favors, but this is not a reason for me to be discouraged. You are the God of mercy and you will not refuse a contrite heart. Cast upon me a look of mercy, I beg of you, and your kind Heart will find in my miseries and weaknesses a reason for granting my prayers.

O Sacred Heart, whatever may be your decision with regard to my request, I will never stop adoring, loving, praising and serving you. My Jesus, be pleased to accept this my act of perfect resignation to the decrees of your adorable Heart which I sincerely desire may be fulfilled in and by me and all your creatures forever.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I know that there is but one thing impossible to you: to be without pity for those who are suffering or in distress. Look upon me, I beg of you, dear Jesus, and grant me the grace for which I humbly implore you through the Immaculate Heart of your most sorrowful Mother. You have entrusted me to her as her child, and her prayers are all-powerful with you. **Amen.**

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