

Reflection for the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

“And then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in the clouds’ with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.”

Mark 13:26-27

Looking at our Gospel Reading this Sunday taken from the Gospel of Mark we have a message that informs us of the Beatific Vision the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His taking us to the Heavenly Kingdom. This message, this vision is an affirmation of what we believe, that there is a world beyond this world, a life beyond this life. As people of faith the understanding of a Beatific Vision is faith sustaining, reminding us that there is a world beyond this world. In Christian theology the Beatific Vision (Latin, Visio Beatifica), is the ultimate direct self-communication of God to a person. For a person the Beatific Vision reaches, as a member of the communion of saints, perfect salvation in its entirety. The person arrives in Heaven.

Recently as a Church we celebrated All Saints and All Souls Days, these two feasts provide us with an opportunity to remember the Saints that have gone before us in faith and to pray for our loved ones that have passed away. Every year in our Parish we have members of the Parish pass away and it is a blessing that we can be there for the family to have a Funeral Mass for them and take the time to walk with them is a very challenging time. Here at our Parish, we are blessed to have many Parishioners that are willing to help, at the Funeral Mass, and with the Reception in the Parish Hall. In speaking with families that have lost a loved one, it always is comforting to know that there is a world beyond this world and that we can look forward to being reunited with our loved ones, one day, in the heavenly kingdom.

As people of faith that know and believe that this world is not the end of our journey, that once our time in this world ends, we have one more journey to take, it is only natural that we would wonder what heaven is like. Our pondering about heaven can lead us in many different directions. We can start with where is Heaven and is it a physical space? What are the directions to it? We can turn to John 14:1-6, and here Jesus is speaking to His Disciples and informing them not to let their hearts be troubled, He goes on to inform them that He has prepared a place for them in Heaven. Thomas one of the Twelve points out that they do not know the way to Heaven and Jesus says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* This scripture passage that is often read at Funeral Masses, can provide us with some of the answers to our questions. We can turn to Mark 12: 18-27 and in this passage in the Gospel of Mark we hear of Jesus having a conversation with some of the Sadducees over if there is a Heaven or not. At the end of the conversation Jesus says to the Sadducees, *“As for the dead being raised, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God told him ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Issac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly misled.”* Jesus clearly points out that there is a heaven and this is a place that is already being inhabited, by those who have taken their journey from this world to the next.

The statement of Jesus to the Sadducees found in Mark 12:18-27 can lead us to our Gospel Reading this Sunday in which we hear, *“And then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in the clouds’ with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.”* This is taken from Mark 13:26-27 and is a part of this Sunday’s Gospel Reading. These two verses lead us back to the Beatific Vision that I mentioned at the start of my reflection. Verses 26 and 27 of our Gospel Reading this Sunday provides us with an image of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ coming on a cloud of glory for us and sending His angels to gather us up in heavenly glory. This vision is life sustaining for those who see it and those of us who look forward to seeing it.