

Pastoral Message: November 14, 2021

We are coming to the end of the liturgical year, and our readings remind us that endings hold the possibility of new beginnings. The scripture from the book of Daniel and the Gospel of Mark today give us what is known as apocalyptic literature. The word apocalypse comes from two Greek words that mean to uncover or reveal. This literature is not meant to be read literally, but more metaphorically. The use of poetry, symbols, dreams, and visions are often used in apocalyptic literature. This literature is known as the literature of the disenfranchised or those who often fall historically at the bottom of the totem pole. The literature is ultimately hopeful, that good will ultimately win out. The call of it is, in the midst of crisis, to dream new possibilities.

The first reading and the gospel were written in a time of great political and religious upheaval, and they were a reminder to the people that there is no possibility of going back to former times. They point towards the future. These readings are very helpful if applied to our current day. Some have suggested that we are living in apocalyptic times—living through a year and a half of COVID 19 with the loss of many lives and the altering of the way we live, bitter divisions that have led to a polarization that has at times led to political violence, deep seated racism that has been unleashed in violent ways, and the reality of an environmental crisis that could destroy our planet. Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* suggests that we are living through a bold cultural revolution that calls us to see the interconnection of everything. The readings remind us that, yes, history goes through periods where it is shaken, but how in the shaking do we see things different. The pandemic, as tragic as it has been, has shown us our interconnection and that our freedom comes with a responsibility for each other. We have probably all heard stories or know of people who lost their lives because of someone refusing to be vaccinated. So much of what we are going through is a reminder that we cannot expect to resolve things from the same level of consciousness that created it. The readings are about us seeing the difficult realities honestly, but also to envision more natural ways of being. Jesus, in a sense, is calling us to pay attention to reality, but also to see differently from a higher level of consciousness, to look at what attitudes and behaviors we are carrying that are destructive and which ones lead to a better more sustainable future. The earth has a way of teaching us. Simply looking at the Potomac River challenges us, I believe, to follow the natural flow of life. Perhaps as we gather for worship, the scriptures today along with the sacraments call us to a different level of consciousness. We would often like answers and formulas, but there are no easy answers, and our frustration often is probably because we are approaching new problems with old solutions. Today's gospel reminds us that heaven and earth are intersecting. May we become more aware of that and move through the turbulence and follow the flow of the mystery of God's love.