

HOMILY
33rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
NOVEMBER 13/14, 2021

There is an ancient tale about a king and queen who ruled over a vast kingdom. They were both getting advanced in years, and they knew that they would not live forever. They never had any children, so they were not sure who would take over for them when they both died. They decided to open up this possibility to everyone in their kingdom. They decided to interview people who were interested, and they would select their successor. They did not want anyone to have an unfair advantage, so they opened up the palace. They opened up the royal closets so that people could select the clothes they would like to wear for the interview. They provided facilities so that people could bathe and prepare themselves for the interview. They provided lotions and fancy soap. They prepared a great banquet with sumptuous food and drink so that people would be able to eat well. They provided music and entertainment for the people while they waited for their interview. There was a gracious invitation for all. The king and queen waited in the royal chambers for people to line up for their interviews. Hours and hours went by, and they decided to go downstairs and find out what was happening. Everyone was gone. The royal closets were empty, the food and drinks had all been consumed. They even took the fancy soaps. The people enjoyed the royal hospitality so much that they forgot why they came. We do that sometimes in life. We forget why we are here. We are here temporarily to get to heaven. We are only passing through.

This is the end of the Church year, so the Readings are all about the end times, or the time of our own death, whatever comes sooner. The Readings are very clear. The material things of this world are going to pass away. Sometimes we get so caught up in the comforts of this world that they take on much more importance in our lives than they deserve; and we can forget why we are here. Livonia is a pretty affluent area, and most of us are very comfortable. Now there is nothing wrong with the material things of this world. They are all part of God's creation, and he gave them to us to be used and enjoyed by us; but we cannot get too attached to them. They do not belong to us; we only have them on loan from God. Some day, when you die, someone is going to put a dumpster in your driveway and empty out the contents of your house. No one will really want all of your stuff. Someone may take the time to donate some of the things to charity; but most likely all of your collections will be discarded, your house will be put on the market and someone else will be living there soon. And your portfolio that may have seemed so important to you, it no longer will be yours. It may give your family something to fight over for years. I learned that as an attorney during the time I spent probating estates. Most likely, the people who inherit it will not really need it, will not really want it or will squander it. Maybe you should give more of it away while you are here.

The Readings are very clear that we do not know the time of the end of the world as we know it or the time of our own death. Intellectually you would all tell me that you know this could be your last day on earth. But in reality, most people do not want to think about this or deep down they believe that they will live to be 100 years old, in good health and will have a few months warning before they die to give them time to prepare. I have been doing funerals every week for almost 20 years, and I am telling you, that never happens. Many people die a sudden death, accident, drug overdose, heart attack, stroke. This happens with no warning at all ages. And if we do not die suddenly, we can get sick and die at any time. We know this could be our last day, but most of the time we do not live our lives that way. I think we need to start, not in a morbid obsessive way, but in a way that we make the most of the time we have left. We sometimes spend a lot of time ruminating about the past. That is not good. We need to learn the lessons we need to learn from the past and then let it go. We sometimes spend a lot of time and energy running away from the pain, suffering, difficulties and challenges in our lives. That just leads to anxiety and depression because we can run but we cannot hide. We need to recognize what is, allow it to be, investigate it and see what we need to do to resolve it or accept what is. We also can spend a lot of time and energy trying to predict the future or control what the future will be. How is that working for you? The future almost never turns out the way we planned. If we ruminate about the past, run away from the present or live for the future, we will miss today which is really all that we have. Regardless of where I am in my life, I can always accomplish what I really need to do to get through today; and I can always find things to be grateful for.

So let's not forget why we are here. We are here temporarily to get to heaven, and we do not know how long this will be. And we know that our lives in this world will have some pain, suffering and challenges and will ultimately end with death. But we must remember what is important. Let's focus upon today, because that is all that we really know that we have. It is all about learning the lessons we are to learn. It is all about the people in our lives and how we treat them. It is all about how well we love. It is all about getting to know Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life. That is going to be our theme for Advent, getting to know Jesus.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim