

Sunday Homily

Title Homily on Apocalyptic Thinking

Date: November 16, 2025

Sunday: 33rd Sunday of the Year

Scripture: Luke 21:5-19

By: Fr. Bob Schmitz

Text: I am amazed at all the end-time stuff in the media—books, TV, movies. The end-of-the-world gets lots of attention. In the New Testament, the writing on the end-time is called apocalyptic literature. It is symbolic writing; it is NOT to be interpreted literally. We must be careful in interpreting it as the authors intended. Two misinterpretations need correction right now.

First, some predict the day and time of the end despite the Lord's warning to avoid such predictions. In today's Gospel, for instance, the Lord says: "See that you are not deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them!" (Lk 21, 8). In Matthew and Mark, Jesus says even he does not know when the end will come, only the Father knows (Matt 24:36; Mk 13:32). Please don't let date-and-time-predictions mislead you.

The second mistake right now has to do with one of our more public billionaires. He studied the idea of the antichrist. From what I have read, he is on the wrong track. The only evangelist who writes of an antichrist is John, and then only in his epistles. John's antichrist is anyone who joins the church, leaves it, and then, works to destroy the church. John says there are many antichrists, people who betray the church of which they were once members (1 John 2:18 and 4:3; 2 John verse 7).

Here's my theory why there is so much end-time stuff in the media. First, we live in times of effective mass communication. Every day, every hour, we get all the news of the world on our devices. There are no filters. Social media is open to everyone; anyone can start a website

or a podcast. Even I have website. No one screens who speaks up. That's OK, in fact, maybe good, IF we develop our own personal filters, our own mental screens. Truth is sacred. We need to give more time to sorting things out and finding truth.

But there is another cause to our end-time thinking. With all the news coming at us, we must admit danger exists. In 1997, an Italian scholar and novelist Umberto Eco got into a public discussion with Cardinal Martini of Milan. They conversed about the end-time. Here is a list of Eco's concerns: "Uncontrolled and uncontrollable proliferation of nuclear waste, acid rain, the disappearing Amazon, the hole in the ozone, the migrating disinherited masses knocking, often with violence, at the doors of prosperity, the hunger of entire continents, new incurable pestilence, the selfish destruction of the soil, global warming, melting glaciers, the construction of our own clones through genetic engineering, and...." He goes on. Almost thirty years later, most of those issues are still a problem or have gotten worse. If we wanted, we could even add new fears to the list. My point is this: there's lots to be afraid of.

Fear is the very reason apocalyptic literature developed in the Bible. Apocalyptic literature developed a century before Jesus and lasted for a century after Jesus. Most of the fear resulted from the invasion and oppression of Israel by foreign powers. In Jesus's time, it was the Romans. People were rightly afraid.

Apocalyptic literature, like we heard in today's Gospel, is an antidote to that fear. It acknowledges evil. But the literature is about God's victory over it. Cardinal Martini said back to Umberto Eco: "It is not a frustration with the present, but rather a prolongation of the experience of fullness, in other words, 'salvation.' Then he said, [:"There isn't now, nor will there be, a power human or satanic that can challenge the hope of believers.":] Apocalyptic literature—like today's Gospel—is about salvation here and now, a bold statement about our salvation unfolding

right now. Please read the longest New Testament apocalyptic writing, the Book of Revelation. In chapter 7, John gives us the victory of the Lamb of God, and then, from chapter 19 on to the book's end, the victory is celebrated. Before the end-time doomsters get to you, meditate on God's victory.

Yes, we know dark times exist. Suffering can be individual and personal. And society can go astray. Evil and sin exist. On a personal level, we can meet suffering with courage. We can gather friends and family for loving support. Socially, we can make our corner of the world better. We can feed the hungry; the lonely can find friends in us; the poor can be raised up to a decent life. Christians call it ministry. A Christian ministry to the suffering or a ministry to correct social misdirection is a BLESSING. It is living in Christ, just as we who receive Him in this sacrament pledge to do. Living in Christ, we experience some sense of God's victory when our love overcomes hate, peace sweeps away violence; our compassion heals wounds, justice defeats abuse and oppression, our kindness rises above cruelty, the truth we find permeates our communication. Apocalyptic literature directs us to God's presence in our world. Hope is grounded in the divine presence. Action sprouts from hope. St. John said it best: "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).