

Homily 33rd Sunday Ordinary Time '21

My first memory of the stark reality of death struck me forcibly when I was about 8 years of age. My Dad's brother, my Uncle Edward, had been in our house chatting jovially but, on his way back home he had a massive heart attack and died. He was 51 years of age. I remember hearing the tragic news when I came home from school the next day and it shocked me so much that I went to my bedroom and felt such a hollowness deep inside. I also recall the stark realisation that no matter how long I lived my death would inevitably come too.

Daniel in today's First Reading speaks of death in the context of The Last Days. Michael, the Archangel, will be present to usher in the last times and in another passage from Daniel The Son of Man will come riding in the clouds to judge the nations. In today's Gospel Jesus quotes Daniel and states 'one like the Son of Man will come in the clouds. The sun will be darkened and the moon will lose its brightness. The hour and the time of the end is known only to The Father but the reality of judgement is clear as the virtuous will be separated from the unvirtuous.

These readings perhaps instil within us a certain fear and trepidation as all of us are, in some way or another, unvirtuous in our lives. However, today's Liturgy's Second Reading assures us that for those who earnestly try to follow, albeit imperfectly, Christ's New Law of Love will be saved. There is no longer need for sacrificial oblations as Christ, our Eternal High Priest, The sacrificial lamb and altar of sacrifice has paid for our sins once and for all.

For years after my Uncle Edward died I feared and dreaded death. The very fact that the experience of finding out that he died is still so raw in my memory is testimony to that fear. Yet, as I've grown older and hopefully spiritually wiser I no longer fear death but in faith I know that, although we know not the day nor the hour, my end of time will indeed come but not as a disaster but as the gateway to eternal life with God. With such thoughts we should comfort one another. Praise be Jesus Christ.