

November 13, 2016 Hollywood – A Bad Ending Homily: Brothers and sisters, in the film capital of the world, Hollywood, many of the movies distributed in recent years have had an unmistakable apocalyptic flavor. Consider the following popular films: “The Matrix”, “Planet of the Apes”, “The Road”, “The Terminator”, “The Day After”, “Children of Men” and many others. What these films have in common is a dark, despairing vision of the future of humanity.

The underlying theme of these and other films seems to be "The world is without hope". Humankind stands powerless in the face of catastrophes. Not surprisingly, religious faith is noticeably absent in these so-called "end of the world" films. The filmmakers of these mostly science fiction tales assume the role of a prophet of doom and gloom. The moviegoer is unlikely to be uplifted by such gruesome, pessimistic fare. Some may be left badly frightened at the real prospect of the world coming to an end. Surely, such a dire message is not uncommon today.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ offers an alternative view, a far more cheerful and hopeful message. In Jesus' day, the temple in Jerusalem was one of the world's great wonders and the jewel of the Holy City. It was the pride of the Jewish people. As the center of worship, it was considered by the faithful to be “the Holy Place of God's dwelling” among the people of the covenant.

Acting as a prophet, Jesus predicts the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the sacred temple. He declares, "All that you see here... the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down". (Lk. 21:5) His prophecy came to pass in 70A.D. when the Roman armies vanquished the city, destroyed the majestic temple, killed many Jews and took many others captive. For the Jew of Jesus' day the temple's destruction must have seemed like “the end of the world”, a shattering event! Yet surprisingly, in speaking of the impending catastrophe, Jesus remains remarkably serene. He invites his disciples not to fear, but to face all of life's difficulties with a steadfast trust. The believer can be sure he is safe in God's hands, even in the most difficult of times. Jesus will not fail us if we trust in Him! His words are consoling. "You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed". (Lk. 21:18)

In our increasingly secular, faithless culture, one hears more and more the many threats to human survival. Global warming, bacterial plagues, nuclear war, overpopulation are just some of the issues that leave so many people in an agitated and anxious state. With no faith in eternal life, all that life has to offer ends abruptly at death. How sad!

We must trust in Divine providence. The world is in the Hands of God. Jesus says, "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for such things must happen first, but it will not be immediately the end". (Lk. 21:9) To those who claim "the end is near", Jesus replies "Do not follow them". (Lk. 21:8)

We must not be terrified. We must not fear the future. Christ is the Lord of history. And we are the elect!

Amen!