

November 29, 2015 The Second Coming of Christ Homily

Dear brothers and sisters, a dear friend of mine, Fr. Anthony DeFranco died a few years ago at the ripe old age of 99. Ordained in the spring of 1938, he served as a priest for over seventy years in the Albany diocese.

On Halloween of that year, the legendary writer, actor and director Orson Welles broadcast on the CBS Radio network a narration of H.G. Wells fictionalized account of an alien invasion from the planet Mars, "The War of the Worlds". It was actually a series of news bulletins, which suggested that the invasion by Martians was then currently in progress. The Martians landed in, of all places, New Jersey. So compelling was the broadcast that it caused mass hysteria. The pastor of one of Fr. DeFranco's neighboring parish of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Schenectady claimed that his parish was inundated with phone calls from frightened parishioners and that many banged on the front door of the rectory, hoping that the pastor would hear their confessions. Was the world coming to an end? Certainly, it seemed so for the many Americans who listened to Mr. Welles broadcast. Indeed, truth is stranger than fiction!

Here we might pause to ask ourselves a question. How do we respond to catastrophic events? When faced with a calamity, how are we likely to react? Do we give in to despair? Is our faith shaken? Has the will to live eroded? We remember, in sadness, those who lost their savings in the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and who later took their own lives, unable to cope with the devastating loss. More recently, there were those who were exploited by Bernie Madoff and his so-called "Ponzi scheme" and lost enormous sums of money. Many of those folks opted to commit suicide.

The season of Advent is a time for looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ "in power and glory"(Lk. 21:27). It is a season of joy and expectation. In our profession of faith, we recite the words, "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead". And then there is the old acclamation of faith "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again". God is faithful to his promises! Today's gospel reminds us that those who endure, who bear witness and who remain alert in prayer have nothing to fear" Faith and not fear is the response of God's people in the face of every tribulation. "But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand" (Lk.21:28)

In the traditional hymn "How Great thou Art" judgment day is described in these words. "When Christ shall come mid shouts of jubilation, to take me home and I shall bow in humble adoration and there proclaim "My God, How Great Thou Art"
Let us all face the future with faith, not fear, and render fitting service to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen!