

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading *Luke 21:5-19*

Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and warns his followers that persecution will come before the end time.

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

In the context of Luke, today's Gospel appears near the end of Jesus' teaching in Jerusalem, just prior to the events that will lead to his crucifixion. His warnings and predictions are ominous but can be read in many ways.

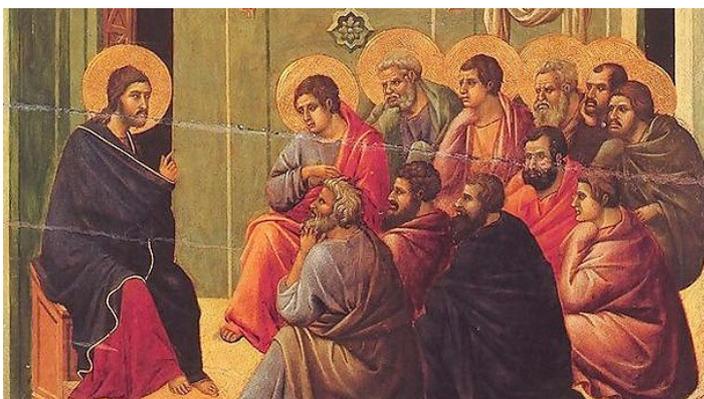
To those who first heard Luke's Gospel, those may have been words of encouragement. The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans was history (70 A.D.); Luke's Gospel, Catholic scholars propose, was written between 80 and 90 A.D. His audience was probably Gentile Christians. Luke here tries to interpret the fall of Jerusalem for them and to locate it in God's plans for humankind (salvation history). At the same time, Luke is suggesting to his audience that there will be a considerable elapse of time before Jesus' final coming. Luke's listeners

have likely seen much upheaval and are anxious to know if these are the signs of Jesus' coming. Luke is urging greater patience.

In the second part of today's Gospel, Jesus warns that his followers will face persecution for their beliefs. Luke presents persecution as an opportunity for the followers of Jesus for "It will lead to your giving testimony" (Luke 21:13). In persecution God's wisdom and power will be shown in the example of followers of Jesus. Perseverance in the face of persecution will lead to their salvation.

Here Jesus is assuring his followers that God is present to all believers, even in times of trouble. Ultimately, Jesus will witness to this with his own death. As disciples of Jesus, we try to follow his example, trusting in God's mercy and protection, even when we are facing difficulties.

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Church of St Francis Xavier

135 Jalan Gasing (Section 10), 46000 Petaling Jaya. Tel: 03-7956 5977 Fax: 03-7957 2435
Website: www.sfx.com.my Phone App: SFX PJ E-mail: sfxchurchpj@gmail.com
Parish Priest: Rev Fr Norris Seenivasan, SJ, Asst Parish Priest: Rev Fr Alvin Ho, SJ

