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# Resurrection and Judgment

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## **Resurrection and Judgment**

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## **Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Sunday Readings for November 15, 2009 for Cycle B:

Dn 12:1-3; Ps 146; Heb 10:11-14, 18; Mk 13:24-32

### **RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT**

*Lawrence E. Frizzell*

As the liturgical year draws to a close, the Church reminds the faithful yet again that life, for the individual and all humanity, is more than our physical and social existence on earth. There is a natural curiosity about "the end of the world", a phrase which means the consummation of history into a new order. But, in divine wisdom, God refuses to reveal the day and the hour to any creature (see Mk 13:31).

We do not know the time for the consummation of the earth and of humanity. Nor do we know how all things will be transformed. As deformed by sin, the shape of this world will pass away. But we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling place and a new earth where justice will abide, and whose bliss will answer and surpass all longings for peace which spring up in the human heart (Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World* #39).

In ancient times the Hebrew people believed that, while each foreign nation had its guardian angel, they were protected by God himself (see Dt 32:8). However, as they came to revere the divine majesty ever more profoundly, this task was delegated to Mi-ca-el ("who is like God?"), the archangel closest to the divine throne. During a terrible persecution under the Seleucid Emperor Antiochus IV (167-164 BCE), the book of Daniel offered consolation to faithful Jews. "Holy Michael the archangel, defend us in the day of battle" was a prayer of Jews long before the Church was founded. Both communities stand in need of divine and angelic protection as they face the varied manifestations of evil forces in the course of history.

The commandments had been given by God so that his people would live (Lv 18:5). However, in time of persecution those who refused to compromise their commitment to the Covenant were the ones who died under horrendous torture. Their consolation was grounded in faith that the fullness of life is communion with the living God. From this insight came the doctrine of the bodily resurrection (in the holy land) and immortality of the soul (in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period). Personal retribution for good or evil deeds in this life may not be resolved adequately in this life, so the faithful hoped that their names would be written in the book of life (Dn 12:3; see Ex 32:32-33). All would rise, but only the righteous would live in the divine presence; the wicked would be punished, disgraced because they abused God's gracious gifts during their earthly sojourn.

Those who accept the divine insight into the meaning of life will shine brightly for eternity; those (undoubtedly the same wise believers) who lead the multitude to righteousness (integrity) shall be like the stars forever (Dn 12:3). This passage emphasizes the fact that Jews (and Christians) live as a people, each adult being responsible as a leader and teacher. Those who serve God receive their reward in the company of both their benefactors and beneficiaries.

The selection from the Gospel of Mark describes the role of Jesus in the Christian vision of final judgment. As in Daniel, the passage focuses on the members of the believing community. "The Son of man will dispatch his angels and assemble his chosen ones from the four winds, from the farthest bounds of earth and heaven" (13:27).

The transformation of celestial bodies at the end of time are described in many Jewish works, and Jesus also emphasized that the varied bodies of the cosmos will participate in the mystery of consummation in God. However, the lesson Jesus taught was based on an analogy with the fig tree. The phenomenon of plant growth should draw us to think of history maturing toward its goal. Rather than look enthusiastically for secret signs that will put Christians at an advantage over others concerning the final days, we should look for the way in which each of us should fulfil our own unique vocation in God's service. The principles for peace with God, humanity and nature have been presented in the Law of Moses and the Gospel. While the work of the Kingdom is God's, we are cooperators in the tasks that prepare it through the response of our daily lives.