

Father Dave's Homily

11/18/12 33 B

- Twenty five years ago, I went through several months dealing with sciatica. Any of you who've had it know how painful it is. I worked with a chiropractor and kept asking him *How long will it take to treat this?*
- Gradually, I did feel better, but it took some months. But many of us ask that same question *How long?* And it is often about something much more serious than sciatica. Ask the man or woman waiting for cancer-screening tests to come back from the lab.
- Those who are troubled have asked that question *How long?* for centuries. When people under stress and even persecution asked it, the writings they produced were called apocalyptic.
- This technical term refers to writings that talk about our distress in a highly symbolic manner. When the symbolism is taken literally we get confused and trouble arises. What is most important about these writings, though, is that they hold out hope.
- They tell us that life is tough...and it may well get tougher. But, in the end, good will triumph over evil, because God is in charge.
- This portion of the Book of Daniel is that type of writing. It was written during the persecution of faithful Jews by Greek rulers.
- The gospel comes from a one-chapter diversion into such writing in Mark. In fact, you could almost lift the 13th chapter out of the gospel and the writing would flow smoothly from chapter 12 to chapter 14.
- It was written shortly after the destruction of the Temple, at a time when followers of Jesus were under great distress.
- The message in both passages is this: *Keep faithful...hang in there. Yes, there is distress, but God will triumph in the end. God is faithful even when everything seems like it's falling apart.*
- We hear this message twelve years into a century which began with great towers in New York collapsing, wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and now in Syria. Truly, God's word speaks to all times and places.

- In our own country we struggle with issues of religious freedom, the meaning of marriage and human rights—all of which are issues around the world. Christians may wonder whether their voices are being heard.
- We need the virtue of Christian hope. Our hope is not a naïve optimism that everything is OK despite appearances. No, our hope is based on God's faithfulness to his people...and on Jesus' triumph over sin and death.
- Meanwhile, the Lord asks us to be faithful, to hang in there. True Christians aren't obsessed with the timing of the end of the world. They are too busy trying to do God's work, and making a difference where they can do so.
- In the last couple of years, a number of people have been fascinated by a Mayan Indian prediction of world destruction which was to occur the first day of winter, 2012. A movie was even made of it.
- Were it true, our parish would be in pretty good shape. For all the destruction would take place in the hours when our annual distribution of Christmas baskets and toys would be going on in our Parish Life Center. Many parishioners are involved in this effort.
- The point of God's word, however, is that we should be living in that mode of charity all the time, and not just a few days a year. Faithfulness is something we show over the long haul.
- When we heed that message, we will be ready when our own "personal apocalypse" takes place...when God calls us to himself.