

For the past few weeks, the [daily] Mass readings have focused on the end times - or if you will, the end of the world. We have heard again and again from various prophetic books telling us of what is to come. And we are told to persevere, and to “be not afraid.” And today, as well, we hear our Lord’s admonition to His disciples from St. Luke’s Gospel.

In the midst of all of this apocalyptic imagery, we stand today on the [last/first] day of the Liturgical Year. One year ago today, there was much to-do about “And with your spirit,” and “consubstantial.” People were talking about what a revolution this would be. Some were angry, and considering leaving - and perhaps many did. Others heralded the dawn of a new age. Newspaper articles proclaimed this a serious crisis for the Catholic Church ... a “sign” that something wasn’t quite right.

Twelve months later, I’m pretty certain that nobody died from saying “And with your spirit.” No one went insane trying to fathom the depth of “consubstantial.”

However, I’m not sure that we’ve had the glowing renaissance in the minds and hearts of some Catholics that was supposed to happen, either.

In other words, much ink was spilled over very little.

And with all of that energy wasted worrying about the new English translation; we find ourselves - one year later - in the midst of another “crisis of immense proportions.” Twelve months from now, this “crisis” will be yesterday’s news, and in a year - we will have something new to freak out about.

In 1929, on June 13 - Sister Lucy received an apparition that is known as the apparition at Tuy, Spain. At this time in her life, she was a Dorthean sister in a convent in Spain. Her cousins, the other visionaries, had been dead now for a decade or so.

In the vision, she saw over the altar a cross. Above the cross was God the Father, between the Father and the cross was a dove - representing the Holy Spirit. And on the cross was, of course, Our Lord. In this vision, we see the activity of the Most Holy Trinity played out - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ... pouring forth the Divine Life in total abundance, with no reserve - yet with no loss, and nothing diminished. Total self gift ... infinite love ... infinite graces ... infinite mercy.

Below our Lord was a host and a chalice; and His blood poured across the host and into the chalice - a very graphic image of the True Presence ... Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

And on the right side of our Lord, stands our Lady as she appeared to the children at Fatima. In her right hand is the Rosary. In her left is her Immaculate Heart.

Under the left side of the cross as if made of running water pouring over the altar were the words “Grace” and “Mercy.”

We all know the old saying - “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” What does that mean for us?

We all began life as infants, yet none of us are as small as we were when we were born. And in our infancy, most of us were Baptized - receiving the Supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. We became, in that Sacrament, the children of God - sons and daughters of God the Father ... adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ ... heirs to the grace and mercy that are the gifts of the Holy Spirit - which through the sacrament of Confirmation were strengthened in our souls.

At least every week - perhaps for some, every day - we approach this altar to receive Jesus Christ ... Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

And through the action of Jesus Christ acting in the person of the Sacred Minister - we are privileged to receive an outpouring of grace and mercy from the Holy Spirit ... that ... should we allow it ... transform us more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

This is change we can believe in - this is a revolution of immense proportions. When we allow God’s power into our lives - we become a new creation ... and we in turn bring His power into the world.

Yet where is this in the newspapers? How much time do we spend talking about how grace and mercy has altered our lives and our world ... transformed our families and our towns ... our parishes and our diocese ... into a new creation ... into renewed versions of who and what we are?

In the Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples, and us as well “*do not become drowsy from ... the anxieties of life ... that the day catch you by surprise like a trap.*”

Are we trapped by our day-to-day anxieties? Have we expended too much effort on trivialities in the here-and-now ... does it surprise us that we may have lost sight of the glory and the promise that is ours in Jesus Christ?

In the reading from Revelation, we are given an image of the New Jerusalem. An image that can be applied to the vision of Sr. Lucy ... as well as to this Holy Mass. We hear of water pouring out - and everywhere the water flows there grows the Tree of Life with monthly harvests and healing leaves.

This is more than beautiful poetry. The true fruits of God’s grace and mercy is life - eternal life ... and if we would only allow it, His grace and mercy can heal whatever it is that ails us.

And as we approach this altar to receive the Most Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray that the whole Church may be renewed in Faith, Hope, and Love during this Holy Year of Faith. May all people be exposed to God’s superabundant grace and infinite mercy so that the words of the Lord’s prayer “Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” may become a reality in our time ... transforming the world into the Kingdom of God.

*A note to the reader: For 2012, the Gospel for the last Saturday of the year, and the first Sunday of Advent were from the same section of St. Luke’s Gospel. Therefore, this homily is written for the Gospel; and the two sidebars are for the First Saturday Blue Army Mass, and the First Sunday of Advent. It is rare that a Gospel is repeated back-to-back; and in this case would happen every six years. It is not my habit to re-use a homily, yet when preparing two homilies for one Gospel on the same weekend - this is the result.*

In the letter from St. Paul, he lays out three things that he desires for his readers in Thessalonika - (1) that they increase in Love, (2) that they be strengthened in their Hope, and (3) that they grow in Faith and in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

As we begin this Advent Season, and with it a new Liturgical Year ... let us take this as our “New Year’s resolution.” With God’s grace, we can all grow in Faith, Hope, and Love.