

In the news this week perhaps you've heard about the demise of the Hostess Bakeries. It's not just a reorganization, but rather it appears that it will be a complete shut down. Late night comedians are making jokes about the supposed immortal shelf-life of the Twinkie; while photo-shopped photos showing funeral services for the Twinkie are populating Twitter and Facebook.

Eight months ago, I had a my own near-death experience ... landing in the Emergency Room and eventually in the Intensive Care Unit with the terminal stages of Type 2 Diabetes. In retrospect, I can now see all of the symptoms clearly ... some going back as far as 10 years. Yet somehow, living in the midst of all this, I missed the symptoms ... and so did my physicians.

Family history of Diabetes? Check. Dizziness? Check. Lethargy? Check. Increased infections? Check. Excessive hunger and thirst? Check. Check. But each of the symptoms was addressed individually as it's own particular disease, and treated with allergy pills, anemia shots, antibiotics, and weight loss plans. I have an entire dresser drawer filled with pills and inhalers and sprays that I no longer need ... because now I treat the root cause of all of those symptoms through self-care under the supervision of my ... new ... doctor.

In the Gospel, we hear our Lord speak about various clues regarding the end times ... the tribulation ... the apocalypse. He is instructing His disciples ... and us as well ... to be attentive to the "signs of the times." Or perhaps, we might call them the "symptoms of our times."

Being in the midst of an ever-changing world with a rapidly fluctuating culture and sub-cultures ... we may find ourselves trying to grasp at this or that event ... in isolation, without noticing the big picture.

There are many authors and end time "prophets" who will sell you their book or a ticket to their seminar ... or else appear on daytime

talk shows or on A&E or Discover Channel ... and while they may mean well, most of the time they are usually only examining a limited number of particular things ... all in isolation.

Throughout history, there have been many who have claimed special knowledge of the end of the world, and up to now, they've all been wrong.

Charles Wesley, the founder of the Methodists, concurred with the Shakers that the world would end in 1794. Charles' brother John believed that it would happen in 1836. The New York Times had an article on the Shakers in 1911 saying that there were only 22 members of the religious group left, and that they were dying off fast. The last Shaker in New Hampshire died in 1992; but to this day there remains a community of Shakers in Maine.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have predicted the end of the world in 1914, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975 and 1994. Nope. Not here yet.

Most of us here have survived the Year 2,000 (remember Y-2-K), Halley's Comet, as well as Comet Hale Bopp.

This should help us realize the need to use prudence in observing and interpreting the signs of the times ... as well as the symptoms of our times. "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Or as Jesus says in today's Gospel: "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*"

We must put our Faith in the things that endure - and in the Person who endures - namely: "*Jesus Christ*" - He Who "*is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*"

As we continue in this month of November, which the Church has dedicated to the Holy Souls - may we remember, in prayer, our beloved dead ... may their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.