

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Malachi 3:19-20a
2 Thessalonians 3:7-12
Luke 21:5-19

Since my ordination two and a half years ago, I have faithfully followed the advice of my instructors in deacon formation to spend adequate time, if time allows, in prayer, study, and meditation on the Scriptures for the weekend mass I'm to preach at. In preparation for this mass, I followed that same routine and then election night came around. I knew this would happen eventually that the homily I have spent a fair amount of time preparing doesn't seem to be appropriate anymore in light of recent news developments. Yesterday, I tossed it aside and wrote down these words.

Tuesday night ended two years of what will go down as perhaps the most divisive election of our lifetime. The often violent, post-election protests in large US cities this week have been proof of that. The election has created, or at least brought to the surface, a deep ideological divide not only in our country but it also caught the attention of the world so much so that its nations had chosen sides in our election like never before. The campaign has brought on significant disagreement among families and friends. And with the election so close with one candidate winning the electoral vote and the other the popular vote, it would be naive for us to believe that our loving family here at Holy Family were all in agreement about who to vote for. Perhaps, many of us had handled the situation by simply not talking about it with each other. As we have seen, our society's reaction has been one of euphoria and surprise to depression and disbelief. Some citizens have been feeling optimism while others are feeling desperation so much so that Canada's immigration website crashed on election night suggesting Americans are flooding the site with requests because so many are not happy about the results and considering moving north.

These thoughts bring to my mind a story very familiar to most of us. It's A Christmas Carol, written by Charles Dickens, about a bitter old miser named Ebenezer Scrooge and his transformation into a kinder gentler man after visitations from the Ghosts of the Past, Present, and Future. From my childhood, the scene that always held my attention the most was near the end when Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Future, a somewhat scary figure dressed in a black hooded robe whose face you don't see. Scrooge says to the spirit: "*Ghost of Christmas Future, I fear you more than any specter I have seen.*" As a child, I didn't quite understand how one could be so afraid of what lies ahead growing up in a very loving and nurturing family. But, as an adult, there have been certain times and events in my life and I'm sure in yours as well when panic and fear would set in regarding future outcomes. Many Americans have expressed fear about the results of this election. And they're not alone. As election results were pouring in on Tuesday night, the stock markets around the world generally lost 7% of their value due to the fear of uncertainty for what lies ahead.

Now, there's another dimension of this story and it has ties to today's Gospel. The Ghost of Christmas Future takes Scrooge to a series of strange places where he learns how the death of a particular man is met with little mourning and even relief and joy at his passing. As his curiosity grows as to who this man is, Scrooge is taken to a cemetery and is shown a grave headstone with his own name on it. Terrified, he clutches to the spirit and begs him to undo the future events he's seen. He says to the ghost: "*Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by altering my life.*" We all know at the story's end Scrooge does change what he sees in the future by changing himself.

In a sense, Jesus does something similar in today's gospel. He gives his disciples of the time a glimpse, as it were, into their future for their benefit. In this gospel, Jesus also gives his disciples of **today**, all of us, predictions that have already come true and will, no doubt, continue — predictions given to us for our benefit.

The Church uses this gospel as the main reading for this second-to-last Sunday of the liturgical year. As Advent approaches and this liturgical year draws to a close, the Church wants us to reflect on the future. But it invites us to do so not within an atmosphere of panic, fear, and impending doom. To that point, how many of you heard someone say after the election: “*We’re doomed*”? Rather the Church invites us to reflect on the future with an atmosphere of Christian **commitment** and Christian **confidence**. By an atmosphere of Christian commitment, we mean within the loving presence of Jesus that we should **always** aim for the ideal, that is to use our talents and resources not for selfish purposes, but for the purpose of God’s kingdom on earth. And yes, that includes persevering in prayer and action to help heal the wounds of division in light of this past week’s election. Jesus speaks of this commitment in the last verse of today’s gospel when he says: “*By your **perseverance** you will secure your lives*”

And by an atmosphere of Christian confidence, we mean within the atmosphere that Jesus talks about in today’s gospel when he says: “*not a hair on your head will be destroyed.*” The prophet Malachi reinforces this in our first reading today when he says “*...there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays.*” In other words, we should reflect on the future not in an atmosphere of doomsday panic, but in one of Christian confidence.

So, in using Christian commitment and confidence as our frame of reference, where do we go from here? Let’s remember Father Jason’s words last week from his homily when he said we have only one savior - Jesus Christ. Let’s pray that our next president recognizes that he was not elected to be our savior but one who strives to heal and unite a divided nation. Let’s pray that he will also remember, in the words of Fr. David McCallum from LeMoyne College, what makes America truly great is our willingness to put others before ourselves to serve a greater good. I ask you to join with me in praying one Hail Mary a day for the first 100 days of his presidency. Pray that Mary, patroness of our country, will provide her guidance and protection.

Today’s gospel, does indeed, put into our hands a glimpse of the future **today**. And because it does so, with Christian **commitment** and **confidence** we move forward positively and with less fear into the future, just like Ebenezer Scrooge. And then we can perhaps borrow from Tiny Tim’s last line at the end of the Christmas Carol story and say: “God will bless us , everyone!”