



Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time † Sunday 18th November 2018

In England & Wales – Cycle of Prayer:
All victims of war; prisoners and their families
Keynote: Our hope is in the Lord

Prophet Daniel 12: 1-3

This remarkable text is one of the earliest and clearest expressions of the belief in the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. The prophet announces: *'At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who mounts guard over your people... when that time comes, your own people will be spared.'* This era at the end of time will be preceded by *'a time of great distress,'* but the prophet encourages the people, *'all those whose names are found written in the Book... (and) of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life.'* As a final word of encouragement to keep faith, Daniel says: *'The learned will shine brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity.'* The language is apocalyptic and strange to our ears, but the message of hope is clear.

Responsorial Psalm 15 (16): 5, 8-11 – A happy song of confidence in the Lord's protection

Letter to the Hebrews 10: 14-14, 18

The author pursues the comparison between the Old Testament priesthood and the greater, more perfect Priesthood of Christ. By making reference to the priests in the Temple at Jerusalem as: *'priests standing at their duties every day, offering over and over again the same sacrifices which are quite incapable of taking sins away,'* and then, immediately by speaking of Christ as having, *'offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place at the right hand of God,'* the writer of this Letter to the Hebrews, shows that Christ – the Eternal Priest, now seated at the right hand of God's throne – has completed the task of atonement once and for all. The repetitive fruitless rituals of the temple are now replaced by the one unique and perfect sacrifice of Christ. Humankind is now reconciled with God.

Gospel according to Mark 13: 24-32

We come with the disciples to Jerusalem, as the narrative in the gospel of Mark brings us to the end of Jesus' journey. The language and style take on a cosmic significance. Jesus says: *'after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.'* These are the signs of the end of time; this is the moment when the Son of Man will be seen in triumph. It is almost, as if Mark would divert our thoughts from the despair and fears associated with the coming events of the passion and death of Jesus. In place of despair, there is, as it were, a parting of the clouds, a prophetic vision, and the words of Jesus echo down to us through time: *'take the fig tree as a parable; as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see these things happening; know that the Son of Man is near, at the very gates... then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory... Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'*