

Sunday After Ascension

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[0 : 00] The end is near. We have all heard and we've read these words.

We often see the lone sign that stands out in the crowd warning us of impending doom and destruction. We hear this in discussions of the national debt crisis that now exceeds \$30 trillion. We see this in national tragedies like what happened earlier this week in Texas. We feel the civic tensions that rise up from time to time and wonder whether or not another civil war will break out in the serious ideological divide that grows wider and wider in this country each day.

We are living in an Orwellian world that can be frightening to say the least. So it begs the question, is the end really near?

Well, the answer is very simple. Yes. Yes, the end is near. As a matter of fact, the end is already here.

[1 : 23] You see, the end came about by the beginning of something brand new. Something very new. The resurrection of Jesus marked a new day.

It marked a new era for world history as we know it. And the ascension of Jesus marks that time when immortality replaced death.

When immortality replaced mortality. And now the Holy Spirit is breathing the breath of life in us. We participate as baptized Christians in the immortality of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. We have died with Christ in holy baptism and now we are raised to a whole new life. And that life promises the resurrection of our bodies.

As we will one day put off corruption and be raised to incorruption. Enjoying immortality that is eternal life forever and ever.

[2 : 36] The Holy Spirit breathes life into us by making us participants of the body and blood of Jesus. As we partake of his immortality, his glorified body in the Holy Eucharist.

And in that Eucharist, Christ dwells in us and we in him. Which is what we say every week in the liturgy. Therefore, the end is at hand.

But the end marks a new beginning. Which is a return to the glorious state of a new Eden.

Where life and where love reigns supreme. So the question we need to ask is simply, What does this have to do with us baptized Christians in the here and now?

At the present moment? Are we to simply wait until Jesus comes again? So that we can enjoy heaven? While we watch the world deconstruct into an abysmal hell?

[3 : 45] Is that our calling? Are we to be people filled with anxiety? As we watch the undoing of a civilized culture for a more barbarian existence?

Is that what we're called to do as Christians? Or do we just simply take a cynical worldview that says, The end is coming, so why polish a sinking ship?

Well, our epistle text answers such questions. As St. Peter says in verse 7 of 1 Peter chapter 4, That's what Peter admonishes a church that was suffering in Rome.

St. Peter says that the end is already at hand. Therefore, be serious. Be watchful in prayer. That's our calling.

We are to be people of prayer. We are to be people who begin and end our day with prayer.

Recognizing that God is in control of all things, And he has given us something to do, And that begins in prayer.

[5 : 09] A life of prayer. We are to be people that do not join in the pessimism of our day, Which is so easy to do today. We are to be people who do not entertain ourselves With constantly listening to talk radio Or the 24-7 news cycle that loves to excite folks On all sides of the political persuasion for one goal, To induce a state of panic.

We are to be watchful. That is, we are to see what's going around in the world. We're not to put our heads in the sand, But we are to be watchful.

But that then should motivate us to be prayerful. We are to pray intently for all. For what went on in Texas and Buffalo And all the tragedy and the carnage That we see all around us.

While being confident in the life And in the hope that we have in Christ Jesus Who has defeated death. St. Peter goes on to say That we are to be people who also love others.

We're not to hide in our basements. We're called to love people. Which is an action. We are to use this time that we have On earth for hospitality.

[6 : 37] Getting outside of ourselves And our comfort zones By serving others According to verse 9. We are to be people who do not grumble.

We are not to be people That are always glass half empty folks. Instead we are to minister. We're to serve others With the gifts that God has given to us.

These gifts are the talents. They're the skills that The Lord has equipped us to do For his service. And for his kingdom. And we are to do this with joyful hearts.

A spirit of cooperation and grace. Rejecting all divisiveness In the body of Christ. Life's too short To sit around and gripe all the time.

We're called to love others. To serve others. To give of ourselves For others. In other words Even though the end is at hand And the end has been at hand Since the ascension The ascension of Jesus We are to be people Who receive the grace of God In the sacraments So that God can fill us up With his grace And we can in return Pour ourselves out For others For the sake of the kingdom of God.

[8 : 00] Our minds are to be fixed On Christ Jesus Who has trampled down death Once and for all And now he reigns As the ascended Lord Over all.

Our minds are not to be Fixated on the deconstruction And the end of some golden age Which by the way There has never been a golden age In history. Friends The end is not only near The end is here But that end Is the abolishment Of slavery to sin And eternal death And eternal separation From God We have been brought near We have now been made Participants in Christ We share We are partakers Of his divine nature In Christ We have been raised To new life And that life Is manifested In the rhythm Of daily prayer That's why We have Bridget Sending out Every day Morning and evening prayer To fix our hearts And our minds At the beginning And the end of day On Christ We are to be people Who love our neighbors We are to be people Who give of ourselves Fully to God As servants Of his church So that others Might join us On this journey Of hope Even in the midst Of the carnage And escape The perpetual spirit Of pessimism And despair That defines A world That knows not Its creator And redeemer And so we end Our sermon With the words St. Peter Closes with This morning We do this All so that God in all things May be glorified Through Jesus Christ To whom be praise And dominion Forever and ever Amen In the name of the Father And of the Son And of the Holy Ghost Amen