

Ordinary 33C 2013

The End of the Story

Every story has a beginning, middle, and an end. But the end of the story is the most important part, or at least the most interesting part. For, it is at the end of the story that we finally understand what the story is all about. The end of a good story resolves all complications, and it brings everything to a satisfying conclusion. The end of a story brings surprises and relief, and it allows us to see what was happening all along, even though we didn't know it at the time. The end of a story is that without which there is no story.

Today, as we approach the end of the Church's liturgical year, the liturgy tells us the end of a great story, the story of salvation, the story of God's presence in our lives—the story of our lives. For example, in today's first reading from the Book of the Malachi, the final book of the Old Testament, the Prophet says that the day is coming when God will destroy the proud and arrogant of heart, and the sun of justice will arise with its healing rays. Malachi tells us the end of the story, and he assures us that at the end of the story God, not the powers of Sin and Death, God will be victorious. God and only God will have the last word.

In the Gospel, Jesus looks to the future when he will return at the end of the ages as the glorious Son of Man, the one who has overcome Death, He says that there will be a time when his followers will be persecuted and despised because of him. But those who persevere to the end will be saved. They will be saved because he will judge the nations in justice. In a word, Malachi and Jesus tell us what we need to know about the end of the story. They assure us that at the end of the human story, at the end of story of our lives,

the final word, the only word that matters, will belong to God. At the end of the story, the final victory will be God's victory.

But we are still living in the middle of the story unsure about its ending, tempted to think that the powers of Sin and Death will be victorious. We have already experienced something of God's salvation in Jesus Christ, but we have not yet experienced the final salvation that God will bring at the end of the story. We are still living in the middle of the story when it often appears that the forces of evil and death are more powerful than the gift of God's grace. We are living in the middle of the story, and so we cannot see the end of the story. This is why we are often filled with fear and apprehension, with uncertainty and doubt.

But imagine how different everything will appear at the end of the story of our lives, at the end of the human story. At that moment we will be able to look back, and we will finally realize what was truly important. At that moment we will wonder why we were so anxious about so many things. At that moment everything will come together because we will finally understand God's plan for our lives. We will finally understand that God was present when we only experienced God's absence. God was present when we thought the powers of Sin and Death controlled our lives. God was always present, but we did not know it.

We are still in the middle of the story. We are still in the middle of God's plan for our salvation and the redemption of the world. How then should we complete the journey of our lives? How should we live in this time between the beginning and the end? The Book of Malachi encourages us to live with hope because the sun of justice is coming

with its healing rays. Jesus encourages us to persevere with the confidence that God will be victorious.

Today's liturgy assures us that in God's way, in God's time, all will be well. Filled with the hope that faith makes possible, we approach this Eucharist. Filled with the faith that empowers us to hope, we are confident that God is already preparing that final day when God will be all in all, that day when the final word—the only word that matters—will belong to God.