

## GOD'S POWER

### *Introduction*

Dear sisters and brothers, today's gospel tells us that we need to remember the power of God. As we look at a description of the Second Coming of the Lord, it is not meant to cause fear but to give us confidence because our God is powerful.

As we come to celebrate the Eucharist this morning, let us experience the power of God in our lives – the power of God which can overcome all forms of evil. And so let us submit and surrender ourselves to God.

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### *Homily / Reflection*

My dear sisters and brothers, from time to time, we read about the end of the world. There are various Christian sects and groups that often warn people that the world is going to end. When a blood moon was forecast in the recent past, there were groups that said it meant the world would end. Others have predicted specific dates on which the world would end. Often, these people support their warnings with Biblical texts. Some of them give their own reasoning, such as: When God destroyed the world during the time of Noah, he used water in the form of floods. Then God promised that the earth would never again be destroyed by water, and so it means that the earth will be destroyed by fire.

Why do these groups and individuals make such predictions about the end of the world? One of the motives is to create fear among people. They misinterpret the scriptures – they read the scriptures out of context and preach a very narrow and misleading explanation of the texts. There are many religious groups that operate on fear and guilt in order to draw more people to themselves. Another motive could be money. Recently in America, a “prayer leader” collected a hundred million dollars just by predicting that the earth was going to end, and he asked for contributions – contributions that were made in fear in order to receive God's grace.

Why does the Church give us this text? As we move towards the end of the liturgical year, celebrating the feast of Christ the King next Sunday, why are we given this text, taken from the gospel according to St. Mark? In order to understand this text, it is important to understand in what context the gospel writer is communicating the Good News. St. Mark wrote this gospel just after the year 70 AD, and during that time, there were various persecutions and calamities. Christians were burnt alive. Peter was crucified upside down. Paul was beheaded. The Christians lived in great fear and trembling, and there was a fear psychosis among the people.

This text is given to us in that situation. It is given very precisely not to increase fear but to foster confidence among the people: to show that our God, Jesus Christ, who has lived among us as a human being—we saw him weep and cry at the death of Lazarus; we saw him tired and hungry; we saw him angry; we saw him as a human being—this text makes us see Jesus as God, as divine. It depicts Jesus Christ as coming among the clouds with angels to obey his commands. He is coming not to create fear but to gather the people together into the kingdom of God. What he needs from us is our readiness to be healed, to be fulfilled, and to know that God's power is higher than all earthly and destructive powers – powers of nature and powers of human beings over other human beings.

This is our consolation, that our God is a powerful God, and no matter what evil powers surround us, God's power will always prevail and be victorious. This is the reason why the Church defends this gospel. It is spoken in apocalyptic terms, and is not meant to be taken literally but understood in a context. We need this

reminder of God's omnipotence from time to time, when we experience our own frailty, when we see disturbing things happening around us. We need confidence that God is reassuring us of his presence and his power.

I recently returned from a meeting in Myanmar, and together with other members of the group, I visited a restricted area of the country, which had IDP camps. Internally displaced persons are placed as refugees in these camps. We visited a camp which had six hundred people, and the local church there is taking care of these people, providing food, shelter, clothing and education. They also share with them the power of God. They preach to them to lift up their broken spirits, because these people were displaced by the military and have become refugees in their own country. They came to these camps in their brokenness and the church gives them hope that the world has not ended yet. God is all-powerful.

My dear sisters and brothers, all of us experience difficulties, persecutions and problems in our lives. We can be confident that our God comes with power to save us from any and every situation as long as we are open to him and welcome his power in our lives. Amen.

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