

It is, I suppose, part of human nature to not give much thought to things we have no control over. People who live in the San Francisco Bay Area, and commute over long bridges to get to work, give little to no thought that an earthquake could strike in the middle of their commute. It has happened before.

Most of us do not give much thought to our own deaths, even though it is a certainty. And so we put off making arrangements, often until it is too late. It is our loved ones who then must shoulder the burden and the expense.

And we do not give much thought to the end of this world, even though it too is a certainty. It may not come tomorrow, although it certainly could. It may not come next week or next month or next year, but it will come. This is a truth of our faith. When we recite the Creed we solemnly profess our belief that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Jesus tells us we will know neither the day or the hour, but that “the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.” (Lk 21:5-6)

On that day, the spiritual warfare of good against evil will come to an end. The evil doers, having neither root nor branch, will be swept away like so many dead leaves in an Autumn wind. The new pagans will be rendered powerless.

But those who walk in the ways of Christ, those who have spent their lives battling injustice and immorality, will be healed of the last vestige of sinfulness.

The wicked will be consumed by a raging fire, but the righteous will shine like a blazing sun. Judgment Day is a certainty. The battle will end. What is done in darkness will be brought into the light. False prophets will be exposed. The victory of Christ, of good over evil, will be realized.

We know this because God has revealed it to us. But the vast majority of humankind throughout history, is ignorant of this fact. For them the future is a dark and threatening mystery. One large non-Catholic Christian community, which has predicted the end of the world several times, actually advises their followers to refrain from the joy of marriage and childbearing, because the end is near.

But for us, for the followers of Christ, Judgment Day is a coming victory.

And although we cannot know the day or the hour, and we cannot stop it from happening, knowing it will happen, sets us free. We are free to live a full life, and prepare for the end.

Several hundred years ago, Charles V was the Holy Roman Emperor. He was one of the last truly great European rulers. He spent much of his reign defending Europe from the vicious and tireless attacks of the Turkish Muslim Empire. After the revolt of Martin Luther, Charles

sought to bring political and religious unity to Christians. He failed only because he was betrayed by his most powerful ally.

In the prime of his life, one of his closest and most beloved advisers, a man who served Charles since his youth, fell ill. As the man lay dying, Charles was there by his side. He wanted to ease the obvious suffering of the man and so he told him.

“My friend, you have been a faithful servant all these years. Please, let me now do something for you. Ask anything of me, and I will do it.”

The dying man turned his weak eyes to his King, and whispered, “Sire, there is one great favor I desire.”

The Emperor was glad at this, and leaned forward, “Tell me,” he said, “What is it?”

“Give me one more day of life - just one day more!”

Charles' face fell. He answered simply, “You know that I have not the power.”

The man smiled weakly, and said:

“Yes, I know. Even the greatest earthly king cannot give life. And now you see how foolish I have been. I served you well all these years, but I gave no thought to my Heavenly King, and now I must go to him with empty hands. Pray for me.”

Those were the dying man's last words.

There will come a day when each one of us will stand before God in judgement. How are we preparing for that day? What is a Christian to do in this era of the new paganism?

Saint Paul gives us the answer: work. Follow the Apostle's example, work in the Church and in the world. Work day and night. Work for the food you eat. This is the great commission we have been given, to preach the Gospel to the whole world, this is our work.

It is a common piece of advice in business to focus solely on the success of your business. You are advised to approach each new opportunity by asking yourself, will this increase my profits or grow my business? Imagine if we applied this advice to our lives as Christians.

We meet people every day who need our help. When we are presented with new opportunities, we should be asking ourselves, will this help my brother or sister, will this bring me closer to God? This is our true business, this is the work we are called to do.

And we will be persecuted for our trouble. We hear about the persecution of Christians here and there as isolated cases, but this persecution will grow to be part of our everyday reality, for us as individuals and for the Church. But Jesus tells His Apostles that this will lead to an opportunity to give testimony to the Truth. We may be betrayed by friends, family, and coworkers. Our witness to the Truth may take place in churches, civil courts, or the public square. Some may even be imprisoned or put to death. But it doesn't matter. What matters, what is expected of us, is that we bear witness with our entire

lives, even if it means putting our lives at risk. In light of God's providence, not even a hair on our head will be destroyed.

Do not give up on your efforts to follow Christ and help others to follow Him. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.

Persevere, in spite of the lies and falsehoods and twisting of the Truth that surrounds us.

Do not be deceived. The new pagans have become very adept at twisting the words and teachings of Our Lord, given to us through His Church. False prophets claim all manner of things in His name. They will say that Christ does not condemn the practice of homosexuality, He does. Leaders of the Church will say that the Bible may be in error. But sacred scripture is sacred, it cannot be in error. And some of the princes of the Church may bow down to pagan idols and claim they are merely symbols. Do not be deceived, do not follow them, God will not be mocked.

As Christians, we are soldiers of Christ. We have been given a share in his mission.

People around us want to know what will happen. They fear the unknown, they fear their own mortality. They fear death. To calm this fear they turn to the occult, tarot cards, and tea leaves, celestial prophecies, witchcraft and magic, all in an effort to ease their anxiety.

But as Christians, as Apostles of Christ sent out into the world, it is our vocation to ease their fears and keep them from the danger of looking for answers in the wrong places.

Jesus wants to tell them the real truth about death, judgment, and forgiveness, and He has allowed us to be His instruments to do so. Christians do not fear death, or armageddon, or the final judgment. If we have lived in faith then we look forward to the day our faith is vindicated.

Hold fast to your faith. Love one another. Work to fulfill the vocation God has appointed for you. This is my prayer for all of us. So that on that day when we stand before Our Lord in judgement, we will not be empty handed.