

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday 2016

Shock, horror, unspeakable grief, weeping and wailing, utter disbelief. Questions like Where are you O God? We believed you were on the side of the poor, the outcast, the exile. But once again wealth and power trumps compassion and kindness. One can only imagine what the Jewish community in Jerusalem must have felt as they witnessed the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 AD. The foundation of their faith, the symbol of God's dwelling with his people was reduced to rubble. And they must have wondered, "Why have you abandoned us? What do we do now? How are we to live in this time of unimaginable anxiety?"

The destruction of the Second temple was a cataclysmic event for the Jewish community. It was Apocalyptic. It signaled the end of the world as they knew it. But out of the ashes of the temple would come something quite beautiful and remarkable. It is known as "rabbinic" Judaism. Without the temple, worship of God, the torah, the interpretation of the Law would find new ways of enlivening people's hearts and souls.

For the Jewish Christian community, the destruction of the temple was sadly seen as a sign of God's displeasure with his people for not recognizing the Anointed one, Jesus. And the conflicts between those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and those who could not see a Crucified and Risen man as God's revelation became even more strident. It's what we hear in the Gospel today from the lips of Jesus but really from the Evangelist Luke.

You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death.  
You will be hated by all because of my name,

With the cataclysmic event of the destruction of the temple, the question for Jews and Jews who were called Christians became "Who are we now?" Where do we go from here? As I said before the Jewish Community found a new way of being faithful Jews in the Rabbinic Tradition. Sadly, those of the Jewish family who believed in Jesus and who were more and more influenced by Greek thought and philosophy and who interpreted the

destruction of the temple as a sign of God's anger, distanced themselves more and more from their Jewish roots. Since the death and rising of Jesus, they had been asking themselves, "Who are we now? Where do we go from here"?

The events of the past week have been cataclysmic for countless people within our country. If "blue" describes a state of sadness and depression, it aptly captures the feeling of so many. And of course those who were seeing "red" because of feelings of alienation, being ignored and left out now are feeling vindicated. Winners trumping losers and many, many, purple with rage.

The "end of the world" scriptures we hear today and every year at this time, do seem very appropriate for the time in which we live. The questions, "Who are we now? Where do we go from here? How will we break down walls and barriers between people when there is so much discord and distrust?

The answer that comes from the lips of Jesus is "perseverance". And what does that mean? Find ways to be "creative" in the midst of crisis. Do what you can for the poor and the marginalized. Things can change. They have changed. What will you do in the "mean time" in which we live? Find the way to walk with each other, building up the human community, and work for justice for all.

Some of you may remember a TV program, Nothing Sacred. It aired in the 1990's. It was written by Jesuit Fr. Bill Cain and St Francis Xavier parish was the inspiration for the series. It was cancelled half way through the season because some Catholics who believe they are always "right", put pressure on advertisers who pulled financial support for the show. Although you can still see the early episodes on You Tube, one you can't see is the final one. I was fortunate to see it when Bill Cain came to Boston College to receive an artist's award and showed it at that time.

The final episode is about a fire, inadvertently set by the young priest who loves the "outward" signs of liturgy like candles and incense. The church burns to the ground but the community gathers in the rubble and the ashes for the Easter Vigil. None of the priests are able to celebrate the Vigil for various reasons and so Sister Maureen presides. I remember the tears that streamed down my face when I saw the episode.

Brothers and Sisters, if you are one of those who find yourself shaken, stunned, wondering what is next, what will it mean for you to preserve?

If you are one of those who are in a better place and are secure with the future outlook, what does it mean for you to preserve?

But thanks be to God for all of you who have come today to celebrate God's faithfulness to us in Jesus Christ, even amidst the rubble and the ashes.