

## No One Knows the Day or the Hour

**Dan. 12: 1-3; Ps. 16; Heb. 10: 11-14, 18; Mk. 13: 24-32**

A couple of days ago, I was reading the latest issue of *Columbia*, the official newsmagazine of the Knights of Columbus. In it were three interviews with former soldiers in WWII who later went on to become Knights. The interview with a 101-year old veteran captured my attention. He said that, although he was not a very devout Catholic back then, when the bullets were flying and the bombs were bursting around him, he prayed. Many people turn to prayer for protection and deliverance when faced with imminent danger.

In the second century BCE, the Jews were being oppressed by an autocratic ruler who was bent on destroying their culture and religion. They prayed for God to rescue them. Although the situation looked dark, they were encouraged to strengthen their faith as they waited for deliverance from their oppressor.

At the time of the Gospel passage, the Jews were suffering under Roman occupation and were praying for a conquering hero to come and end their suffering. Jesus knew their anguish but He went beyond their immediate needs and spoke of the end of days when He would return to earth to gather up His faithful followers.

Jesus said that no one knew when this would happen but, just before it did, there would be clear signs. The sun, instead of shining brightly, would be darkened. The moon would not shine. Perhaps a solar eclipse? And stars would fall from heaven. Perhaps a shower of meteors or asteroids? A truly frightening scenario.

But, after scaring His listeners, Jesus reassured them that, from this apocalyptic situation, He would come back to earth to gather up all His faithful followers to take them with Him to heaven. He encouraged them to remain faithful and to be prepared. The thought of Jesus coming from His place 'at the right hand of God' and 'with great power and glory' to end the suffering was very encouraging. But the question on everyone's mind was: 'When would this happen?'

Jesus simply said that 'no one knows the day or hour'. He said that only the Father knew the day and the hour when all this would take place.

From the time of Jesus and down through the ages, there have been people who thought that they could predict the end of the world. They even provided a date when the end would occur and, when the day passed without the feared event taking place, people would laugh at the prognosticator and go on about their daily affairs. After a while, many people stopped believing that Jesus would return and that the earth would 'pass away'. Even if they still believed, they thought that the event was too far in the future to worry about.

There are many people who think that we are seeing the signs of the end times today. And who can argue with them? There are volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, global warming, huge forest fires, environmental disasters, hurricanes, droughts and so on. It is easy to think that the end is near.

We know that the modern world is far different than that of Jesus' time; our lifestyle is different, our technology is different. And yet, Jesus' teachings are timeless. They are no less relevant today than when He uttered them. As He said: 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.' He is telling us, as He told the Jews of His time, to wait patiently and faithfully for Him to return to gather us up and take us to our heavenly home. And, while we wait, we are to follow Jesus' commandment to love.