

Saturday, November 28, 2015
Dn 7:15-27; Lk 21:34-36

We have come to end of the liturgical year. The Gospel passage we have listened to closes the eschatological discourse that we have been meditating on these past days. Jesus was speaking in Jerusalem. He went to the Temple every day to teach the people, then when evening came, he went to the Garden of Olives to pray. He did that up until the last day of his life, until Holy Thursday when his enemies took him prisoner to put him to death the next day. Thus, when Jesus told his disciples to “Be vigilant at all times and pray,” he wasn’t speaking in a vacuum, he was speaking from his own experience. He knew that at the crucial and trying moments in our lives we must be watchful and prepared.

Spiritual tradition teaches us that watchfulness means right living, living as if each day were our last. We mustn’t miss the moment, we mustn’t fail to do good, thinking that we’ll have time tomorrow. We are called on every day to work for an increase of love among all people. We should think that each day is our last, in the sense that there will never be another day like today, and once it is gone, it will never come back. Every day is a blessing. That was how the Lord began the history of the World: each day of creation he brought forth something good, including rest and celebration.

Dear friends, we must not waste our days on Earth. Live each one

with care and love. It is not only through laziness that days can be wasted. Days are wasted when we live only for ourselves, when we use time only for our own benefit, our own affairs. Living an egocentric life means not thinking about others, not even about Jesus. That is the deep meaning of the Gospel warning we have heard: “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, lest that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth.”

Day by day we need to feel the Lord at our side. He won't leave us, He won't abandon us. As He was about to be lifted up into the heavens, he said to his disciples, “Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” No. We are not orphans, we will not be abandoned. Even if we live in a large city, even if we are few, even if some times great distances divide us, Jesus is at our side. We can take to heart the words of the Apocolypse, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If someone hears me and opens the door, I will come in and we will break bread together.” (Apoc. 3:20) Jesus is asking for someone to listen to Him. Jesus is near with love and in turn He asks to be welcomed with love. That is the meaning of the word “knock.” Jesus asks us to let him in to speak with us. Being His disciples means listening to the word, His word, and taking it to heart. Watchfulness, dear sisters and dear brothers, means first of all listening to Jesus. A disciple is one who listens to the Gospel every day. Prayer is above all

listening to the Lord and to His word. We can say that watchfulness and prayer are one and the same. Prayer frees us from thinking about ourselves, it makes us raise our eyes to the Lord and open our hearts to His word. We need Jesus to be with us, we need His company, His help, His word. The ancient spiritual teachers were right when they said that prayer is the first duty of the Christian. Prayer leads us to discover that we have a Father and that we are “children.” The Father loves us, nourishes us and protects us from evil. To the disciple who asked, “Lord, teach us to pray,” Jesus answered him with the words, “ Our Father, who art in Heaven....”

Jesus commands us to pray always, without tiring. For us, poor, limited men and women, “pray always and without tiring” means praying every day. With daily prayer we re-orient our lives toward God. So often daily life, with its rough and dizzying pace, disorients us, distracts us from God and from the poor. But prayer re-orientes us, brings us back to Jesus. The Gospel reminds us that we must “stand before the Son of Man.” Prayer places us every day before the Lord who is a good and merciful judge. And every day he judges us. Matthew the Evangelist says that the Last Judgment will be about love: I was hungry and you gave me to eat; sick and you took care of me, a prisoner and you were concerned for me, a stranger and you took me in.

Dear sisters and dear brothers, tomorrow begins a new liturgical year, and Pope Francis has proclaimed it a Jubilee Year of mercy. We

will trace each day with a page from the Gospel and a work of mercy as we walk the path to happiness that the Lord has opened for us.