

# 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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## *Constant Wakefulness*

One day, a catechism teacher brought a new mobile phone to her catechism class and offered them a challenge: “I am going to ask you a question. The student who is able to provide me with the correct answer will receive this new phone as a gift from me, with a condition. That student will then have to ask me a question in return. If I am able to answer the question correctly, I will get my phone back.” All the children nodded in agreement and prepared themselves for the teacher’s question.

The teacher asked: “What is the name of the disciple who was elected by the Apostles to replace Judas Iscariot?” Immediately, one of the children stood up and replied: “Mathias!” “Oh, that’s the right answer.” she responded. “Here’s the phone.” And now the student had to ask the teacher a question in return. After some thought, he asked: “Teacher, how many people were fed the five loaves and two fish that Jesus multiplied?” The teacher answered: “Five thousand people.” “Okay then,” replied the child, “tell me the names of the five thousand people!” Stunned to silence, the teacher lost her new mobile phone forever.

In today’s Gospel, we are posed a question that has no clear answer: When will the second coming of Jesus be? In the passage, Jesus says that no one knows the day or hour; neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Chapter 13 of the Gospel of St. Mark has great significance as it foretells the culmination of Jesus’ teaching ministry. This chapter speaks about the sufferings, death, and future glory of the Son of Man. By extension, it also provides the persecuted Markan Christian community with answers and the reassurance that Christ will take care of them. The observations and teachings of Jesus from the tradition of the Markan community in Chapter 13, were to tell them not to speculate about the end times, the end of the age, or



to read signs that might aid in calculating the exact time when things might happen. The chapter serves, rather, to encourage believers to faithfully live according to the Gospels through the time between the resurrection of Christ and the second coming of Jesus, the Son of Man.

Through this message, Christians who faced tribulations and sufferings were fortified with courage, comfort, and the knowledge that Jesus, their Master, had triumphed over suffering and death. In this great faith, Christians are called to a life of constant wakefulness, as they endure their life, firmly living according to Gospel principles.

The consolation through all suffering is in the knowledge that Jesus, the glorious Son of Man, will come “with the clouds of heaven” to gather his chosen ones from all over the earth. This Old Testament imagery was taken from the book of Daniel (7:13). The narration recounts the vision of Daniel; that the Ancient One will judge people. St. Mark clearly states that all this will happen through Jesus, the Son of Man. The difficulties, the darkness that envelopes them, and the anguish that they face now: the Son of Man promises final victory over everything. With this certainty, they may endure in hope, and encourage themselves in moments of difficulty. Hope and perseverance in faith are key in retaining and maintaining our Christian life even through dark days of suffering. And Jesus reconfirms the assurance of reward and comfort offered to all who are faithful to the Gospel.