

My dear people of God, our first and Gospel readings of today speak about **“The coming of the Son of Man”** (the second coming of Christ). The coming of the Son of Man has been described as the end of time by the prophet Daniel in our first reading (Dan.12:1-3 and also 7:13). The second coming of Christ is not only for judgment, but also for hope. According to Daniel's vision, he will bring deliverance for the nation at the hand of Michael, Israel's protector; there would be a resurrection of many, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting horror and disgrace. Finally, the exaltation of **“the wise”** who lead others to righteousness, will shine brightly like the stars forever. Thus, we are being invited to prepare ourselves and to stay ready in order to avoid the obvious. The first reading is very important, because this is the first time in the Book of Old Testament explicitly makes a reference to the resurrection of the dead. Daniel is giving this message of hope to the chosen people who are about to give up so that they will continue the life of faithful service to the end.

The book of Daniel has inexplicit historical references, but its main purpose is to point to the future. In other words, history will yield to eschatology (last ages) and deliverance will take the form of resurrection. “Those who lie sleeping in the dust” refers to the dead since ‘sleep’ is a euphemism for death. The resurrection referred to, here, is a total transformation since the redeemed will **“shine as bright as stars for all eternity.”** There is use of poetic and symbolic language to convey a deep truth about death and resurrection. Again, Psalm (16), our responsorial Psalm, also expresses an individual's trust and hope in God to deliver him from death and the grave. “You shall not leave my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption Ps.16:10”. Although the psalm does not refer to the resurrection as understood in the New Testament, it is used in the liturgy to highlight hope in the unique resurrection, promised by Jesus alone.

In today's Gospel, Mark 13:24-32, the evangelist Mark describes the climactic moment, the arrival of the Son of Man as **a day of great tribulation**: the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from the sky and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. This is a vivid apocalyptic imagery as portrayed by Prophet Daniel and in Revelation. The Son of Man will come with **“great power and glory and all eyes shall see him Mk.13:26”**. Again, the message of this Gospel can also be a message of hope for Christians, who were being beaten up and thrown into jails, that they would be saved by God, because the ultimate human history would climax in the perfect Reign of God. The Christians duty was to hang on and patiently to endure to the end. Christ has already assured his disciples the sure hope of resurrection and calls them to a total commitment that requires great sacrifice. He tells the disciples that to be truly alive, they must be willing to deny themselves and take up their own crosses (Mk.8:34-38). The cross symbolizes denying the way of the world and embracing the way of Jesus. It means tough self-sacrifice and, at times, a willingness to suffer for what is right. The fact is that commitment to Jesus and to the cross leads to true freedom, to joy and to everlasting life. The path to resurrection is the way of the cross; therefore, the disciples should not give up.

Finally, dear friends, Jesus, our Lord has given us this warning to take to heed, to watch and to pray, because we do not know exact time and day the Son of Man will come. Vigilance is, above all, love. A person who loves keeps the commandments and looks forward to Christ's return, for life is a period of hope and waiting. Let us remember that the day of the Lord will come like a thief. Therefore, as we are waiting for that day, let us make every effort to be found without stain or defilement, and to be at peace in his sight. Let us consider our Lord's patience as opportunity directed toward salvation. Let us pray that his coming will be a blessing for us. Amen!