

“...of that day or hour, no one knows....”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, an American columnist wrote about how the old Soviet Union prepared its people for the announcement of **‘bad news.’** He wrote:

“It is not considered very fashionable to say the Russians have a great idea. But (...there’s that proverbial **BUT already), the Russians have a great idea. I think we should consider copying it.”**

He continued by describing how the Russian government prepared its citizens for **‘bad news’** by interrupting the regularly scheduled, government-controlled, radio and TV programs by playing somber, symphonic music.

Sometimes the music played for an hour. Sometimes it played for a whole day, sometimes longer. The purpose was to prepare the people, psychologically and spiritually, for **‘bad news,’** for example, the death of a prominent Russian leader or the death of a Russian cosmonaut.

This practice, of course, drove the Western news media crazy, but the Russians had a point:

People need to be prepared for **‘bad news.’**

I share this information with you because today’s Gospel, which I/deacon just read to you from St. Mark, portrays Jesus doing the same, i.e., preparing the people for **‘bad news.’** He tells them that a great catastrophe will take place in their lifetime. Moreover, that it will be preceded by certain signs.

History records that Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. This catastrophe took place within 40 years of Jesus’ death. It ended the Old Testament world, as the Jews of Jesus’ time knew it.

This helps to explain why Jesus’ warning of the catastrophe has always been interpreted by Christians as a warning, also, of the end of the entire world. And this is how the Church uses it in today’s Gospel.

How, exactly, does the Church use it, this way, in today’s Gospel, **you ask?**

Well –I am glad you asked that question!

It uses it --NOT to refer to the end of the **Old Testament world of the Jews**, but to the end of the **ENTIRE world itself!** No one knows **‘of that day or hour’** when that monumental event will take place --only our Father in heaven.

In today's Gospel, Jesus sets before us two sobering themes:

The suddenness with which our life could end & our preparedness for that end.

These are themes that have the potential to change our lives far worse than '9-11,' Ft. Hood, or Benghazi did, as horrible as those events were! And that's **why** the Church sets these two themes before us at the end of the liturgical year, concluding next week with the Feast of Christ the King.

It wants to remind us, as Jesus reminded his disciples, that our life on this Earth is... but a brief preparation for the never-ending, immortal life to come.

No one knows how or when our earthly life will end or when the life of the entire world will end—only our Father in heaven.

ERGO ^(THEREFORE), we should not get so involved with our earthly life... that we lose sight of our endless life, yet to come. Either we believe we have an immortal soul or we don't. And, if we do, then we should act accordingly. It's just that simple!

The Church's intent is not to frighten us ...any more than Jesus intended to frighten his disciples. It is merely, simply put, meant to be a 'reality check.' It is telling us, as Jesus told his disciples, that we should always be prepared for that un-known moment. Whether we are present for the collapse of the entire world or not, this life, as we know it, will have an end. It will come, most likely, when we least expect it. It may come quite suddenly, giving us little or no time to prepare. As Scripture says in one place, **"(It will come) ...like a thief in the night."**

The bottom line is **this:**

We don't know when death will come, but come it will, and... we-should-be-prepared!

It's just **that** simple!

I now close by sharing with you this passage from a book called God's Trombones. The author describes the final moments of a saintly woman he called 'Sister' Caroline, though she wasn't a nun.

**"She saw what we could not see; she saw Old Death.
She saw Old Death coming like a falling star.
BUT... death didn't frighten Sister Caroline.
He looked, to her, like a welcome friend.
And she whispered to us: 'I'm going home now.'
And with that she smiled... and closed her eyes."**

So, I am saying to you...

Don't **be afraid... be prepared:**
to live for all eternity...
with family & friends...with old pals & pets
where every tear ...will be wiped away!

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you...
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen