

Homily

Sunday 33 (B)

18 November 2018

They never said it was going to be easy. And I don't just mean trying to be Prime Minister or trying to deliver BREXIT, nor do I just mean coping with sexual abuse, collusion and cover up. Nor do I just mean trying to survive in a Church shot through with clericalism and dishonesty, not to mention sheer incompetence and lack of communication.

No, the difficulty I speak of is way beyond that. It is a difficulty of cosmic proportions. *The sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken...A time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence.*

No wonder we find it difficult to pray. No wonder people find it difficult to commit themselves. No wonder faith in God, faith in humanity, faith in life is elusive for so many. And no wonder the virtue of hope has almost disappeared.

Being a Christian has always been about standing on the cliff edge, holding on with our finger nails, staying awake and standing ready, staring into the abyss and yet still remaining resolute. *Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.* Michael, the great prince mounts guard. We have nothing to fear. The Son of Man himself is going to come *with great power and glory.* We, his chosen ones, are going to be gathered *from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.*

How can we be sure of all this? How can we be so sure that the abyss is not about to swallow us all up? And, anyway, isn't this all we deserve, destruction, darkness, distress? Isn't this *why priests stand at their duties every day* trying to placate an angry God?

The answer to all our questions, to all our doubts and fears, is always Jesus. He is the only priest to make *that one single offering* that achieves *the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying.* He is the only one to pass right through the abyss and reach the other side, the only one to go on praying and loving right through the desolation and darkness, the only one to face every evil and overcome it, the only one to take *his place for ever at the right hand of God.*

Jesus has done all this for us, for you and me. We are those *whom he is sanctifying,* whom he is forgiving, whom he is gathering. Come Hell or high water he is with us always.

*I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.*

Fr Michael