



“End-times light” ~ Homily for Mary of Magdala ECC on the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, November 17, 2019 Father Michael Nicosia

You have heard it said, “The Kingdom of God is at hand.” It’s not some far off dream or heavenly destination, but a realization of God’s reign lived in the present. What if the end of which Jesus speaks is at hand in the same way? ...stone after stone dismantled, realized in the tribulations, deceptions and crises of our everyday lives?

It seems like “the end” whenever our certitudes are challenged and the house of cards we thought so permanent comes tumbling down.

“For lo, the sun comes, glowing like a furnace, and all the audacious sinners and all the perpetrators of wickedness will be stubble.” It’s not hard to imagine that our readings are talking about the current Impeachment hearings, where the sun of justice is shedding its light on all of the “alternate truths” and fake news we’ve been asked to swallow. One can interpret it that way from whichever side you take, for both sides insist that their partisan opponents are leading us astray. We pray our democracy survives the heat, but if it brings about the toppling of those who abuse their power, the overthrow of unjust systems of oppression, the burning away of each branch of evil and its very root in our hearts — Lord, hasten the day!

It seems evident that Luke’s gospel wasn’t talking about a future “end times” but about a very present reality as the first Christian communities were being persecuted for their testimony. Having Jesus foretell of their tribulations and affirm that they would not be harmed may have been Luke’s way of giving them hope and strengthening their patient endurance in the midst of their ordeal. In the midst of our personal ordeals, may we be so encouraged.

Jesus’ prophesy comes true in every age. There have been many times in the history of the Church where accusations of falsehood were made and people were forced to testify before tribunals about their faith. The fires of the Protestant Reformation and the Holy Inquisitions of the Roman Church tried to burn away falsehood—from opposite perspectives. “Don’t follow them!”

Fortunately, we’ve come a long way from seeing Catholics and Lutherans and Episcopalians as adversaries. Over the centuries, the sun of justice has been burning away the real falsehood: the belief that anyone holds a monopoly on Truth. Indeed, I have found that there are no absolute answers in life, no ultimate truths that we can grasp from our limited perspectives. There are only deeper and deeper questions, leading us into deeper relationship.

That light shone brightly on October 30th this year, when our ECC Region shared in an Ecumenical Eucharist with our Lutheran siblings of the Rocky Mountain Synod, and our bishops signed our agreement to live and work and worship and grow together. That light shines brightly in this community, where a Holy Threesome—Lutheran, Episcopalian and Ecumenical Catholic — are forging new ways of being church together. That light is dismantling the walls that have divided, stone by stone; but that can only happen with your engagement, in your participating at

joint events, Advent programs and worship services; and it can only happen through the holy conversations that we have with our siblings in Christ.

Worry not about what we will say in these engagements. We may come up with more questions than answers. — Yeah! Deeper and deeper questions, leading us into deeper relationship.

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/111719.cfm>