

- As we near the end of the liturgical year and prepare for Advent, our readings always turn toward the end times. This is because Holy Mother Church wants us to prepare for our own death by meditating on the end of this world.
- Man has always had a fascination with death, destruction, and the end of the world. That why books and movies dealing with such things are both popular and widely available. This is nothing new.
- In the years leading up to the Year 1000, there was a certain amount of panic that, with the turn of the millennium, Christ would return and the world would come to an end.
- And in our own time, we can see that there is no shortage of self-proclaimed prophets predicting doom and gloom for the world sometime in the near future.
- Certainly our own scriptures, especially the Book of Revelation, speak in such vivid terms of what will happen with the world does come to an end.
- Both our first reading today from the Book of the Prophet Daniel, as well as our Gospel reading from the Gospel of Mark are apocalyptic in nature and speak a bit of the calamities to come.
- We are told that the end of time will be: “a time unsurpassed in distress,” and that “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.”
- Yet as we set our minds to the end of the world, I think it more beneficial for us to meditate on the good things that God will do in that time for those who love Him rather than focus on the calamities. Our readings today make some good points about this!
- In our first reading our Lord speaks beautifully about how many who are dead shall awake and live forever, with the wise shining “brightly like the splendor of the firmament,” and “those who lead the many to justice” shining “like the stars forever.”
- And in our Gospel our Lord tells His disciples that He: “will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.”
- The point here is that those who love God and who are striving to live in accord with His will, really have nothing to fear. While we may have to undergo some amount of suffering if we are living during the end times, ultimately Christ will save us!
- Now, I do not know if we are nearing the end times or not. We’re certainly living in a time of great confusion and error – both in our Church and in society at large.
- We are living in a time when so many evil things are being embraced and touted as good by large numbers of people in our society. There is also an incredible amount of violence, hatred, and persecution in our world today.
- Even more than that, many people are falling away from Christianity and embracing all-out paganism – or they are turning away from God altogether and embracing an atheistic and nihilistic existence.
- But regardless of what’s going on in our world, we should not worry. Rather, we should focus on God’s promises of mercy to those who love Him!
- Last week I spoke about how we must repent of our sins as a means of preparing to receive God’s mercy. Simply put, we cannot ask God to give us mercy for our sins if we are not willing to repent of them first.
- It’s a cheap mercy that comes without repentance of sins. Ultimately we need to repent of our sins and seek God’s mercy as a means of preparing for our death.

- Perhaps this is why Pope Francis has called for the upcoming jubilee Year of Mercy: to bring us all to a greater level of holiness so that we will be better prepared for death.
- As we prepare ourselves for the extraordinary graces that will be available to us in this upcoming Year of Mercy, there are certain things that I suggest we all do throughout the course of this year to bring God's mercy more fully into our lives and into the world.
- First and foremost, as we consider the terrible state of our world, it's important for us to beg God for mercy both for ourselves and for others. While not everyone may realize it, everyone *is* in need of God's mercy! We are all sinners!
- And as we ask God for mercy for our own sins, it's important that we also pray for those who do not know or love God, and especially for those who hate God and are in most need of His mercy. This is no time for us to think only of ourselves.
- We must cultivate within ourselves a holy magnanimity that allows us to overlook the faults, failings, and sins of others so that we can pray for them rather than judge them.
- With this in mind, a second thing we should do during this Year of Mercy is make reparation for our own sins as well as the sins of others. Again, so many people in our world do not realize the importance of making reparation for sin.
- So many people do not realize that our sins not only displease God, but that they are an injustice against Him, and thus we should not only ask God for forgiveness for our sins, but we should also do penance for them.
- In our chapel there are little red booklets in the pew racks entitled, "A Holy Hour of Reparation," and praying through this booklet during a holy hour is a great way to make reparation for sin – both one's own as well as that of others.
- Praying the Rosary or doing any type of self-imposed fasting or penance can also be a great way to make reparation for sins. And throughout the Year of Mercy, it would be good for each of us to be more conscious of the need for reparation.
- A third and very important thing we should do is simply to be merciful to others by forgiving those who have wronged us and practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
- Being merciful to others out of true charity makes our hearts a little more like Christ's heart, makes reparation for our sins, and it helps procure God's mercy for ourselves.
- Lastly, as we consider how generous God is with His mercy, I think it important that we be demonstrative of our love for Him in return! Our love for God is best shown through obedience to His laws and commandments, and by seeking to do His will in all things.
- But little acts of love, done quietly and solely out of love for Him, as well as constantly striving for virtue and doing all things for God's glory, is so very pleasing to Him and forms us in holiness.
- Showing God that we love Him helps to perfect us so that we need less purification after our death.
- Brothers and sisters, while I do not know if the end times are upon us, I do know that we will all have to stand before God someday and make an accounting of our lives. However, it doesn't have to be a bad meeting!
- What matters most on Judgment Day is not so much the sins we've committed in this life, but rather that we are sorry for them and have sought His mercy for them.
- May the grace of true repentance be granted to us all, and may the upcoming Year of Mercy be a time of unsurpassed grace for our parish, our Church, and our world.
- Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!