

Maronite Monks of Adoration

Most Holy Trinity Monastery
✦ Petersham MA 01366-9725

November
2005



PATIENCE




HOPE




We are coming to the end: the end of the year, of our lives. The world, in fact, is coming to an end. Now one of these things, as they say, is not like the others, for we know *precisely* when the year 2005 will end. As for the other two, our Lord tells us to “watch and wait” because whether we consider the end of our individual lives, the end of civilization as we know it or quite literally the end of the world “no man knows the day nor the hour”.

As is so often the case, we may need to rephrase our questions. If we let ourselves be guided by the wisdom of the Church we will, when considering the end, however construed, ask - not when - but *what*? What should I do in view of the end? What is God’s will for my life? What does God ask of me, now that the end is coming?



The answer? In a word: virtue, and specifically patience and hope.



In many ages previous to ours, men thought that the end was near. Some thought they knew the precise date. In a way they were all right; they, and everyone they knew, died and was judged and now await the resurrection.

The saints and doctors of the Church knew well that the end in fact was, and is, coming. They spoke of it often. And if they did not involve themselves in forecasting exact dates, they certainly did not distance themselves from urging all to make earnest preparations. Among these oracles was St. Ephrem, Deacon, Poet, Father and Doctor of the Church. Here then is his advice concerning the end, preaching on Luke 21:25-33.

At that time, Jesus said to His Disciples: There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves; men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. And He spoke to them a similitude. See the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh; so you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Shining is the life of the Just, but in what does it shine if not in patience? Love this virtue, O Christian, as the mother of fortitude. For the psalmist admonishes us, saying: *Expect the Lord and keep his way* (Ps. 36:34). Paul also says, teaching us the way in which we must acquire virtue: *tribulation worketh patience* (Rom. 5:3). Exercising patience you will discover hope, the source of every good: *and hope confoundeth not. Be subject therefore to the Lord, and pray to him*, and you will then find that *he will give thee the requests of thy heart* (Ps. 36:7, 4). What more blessed than this, to obtain merciful hearing from such a King? Who does not eagerly wish that the ears of his judge shall be accessible and gracious? Thou art a worker of virtue, O Brother, and Christ has brought thee into His vineyard; *therefore while you have time, do good.*

Hear Paul saying: *For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap* (Gal. 6:8); sow in the spirit, so that you shall *reap life everlasting. For he that soweth in his flesh, he says, of the flesh also shall reap corruption.* Hear the good exhorter reminding us: *sow for yourselves in justice, and reap in the mouth of mercy* (Osee 10:12). Be not then neglectful in striving, setting before your eyes the fruits of hope.

Where there are contests, there are rewards. Where

there are wars, there are victories; and where there is warfare, there is likewise a crown. Looking to this end, anoint thyself with patience. Say to thyself at all times the holy words: *Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord* (Ps. 26:14).

Get ready to go forth to thy work, and gird thyself to cultivate thy field. The field is your present life, and for a hoe take with you the Old together with the New Testament. Put a hedge of thorns about your field and your soil, by prayer and fasting together with instruction. If you are protected by this enclosure, the wild beast shall not invade thee, by which I mean the devil. Tend thy soul after the manner of a beautiful vineyard. And as the guardians of the vineyard strike at the thieves with their fists, and call out to them with warnings, and keep them at a distance with stones, so you cry out in prayer, and shout with the song of psalmody, and put to flight the thieving fox, that is, the devil, of whom the Scripture says: *catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines* (Cant. 2:15).

Be watchful of thy enemy, lest he pierce your heart with some obstinate and unfitting desire. If he seeks to possess your soul as a field, and places there his unclean thoughts, resist and oppose him with the shield of faith. Put on the helmet of hope. Draw the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And so armed against the enemy, stand fast, and be not unwatchful in the battle, but show yourself sober and vigilant in all things. For we are not ignorant of his designs. *Rejoice always in the Lord*, as it is written. *Let your modesty be known to all men* (Phil. 4:4-5). Let the fear of the Lord have place in your heart. But be not a timid soldier, nor a slothful, lazy workman. Do not reject thy crown. Time is short, but judgment is long...



May we offer glory, praise and honor to Christ who gives life to the dead and raises to life those who are in the tomb. He is the hope of the living and the salvation of the human race. He will come in glory to exalt our mortal nature. To Christ, the good One, are due glory and honor, on this day and all the days of our lives, now and forever. Amen!

Maronite Mass: Hoosoyo of Saturday (Faithful Departed)