

Just a bit of clarification on Jesus' line "This generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place." At first glance, it looks as if his prediction did not come true, but the reality is that he is actually speaking about future events. The generation refers to the people alive in the future when the events take place. Could be our generation?

Essentially, Jesus is saying that, once the events of the end times begin, they will happen quickly. The age of grace has continued for a very long time. But when the time for judgment finally arrives, things will be wrapped up immediately. This concept of God's drawing things to a rapid close is echoed in many other passages of Scripture

We are coming to the end of another liturgical year, the end of a season, the end and the beginning of a new time in the Church year. Endings can be a bit daunting because we know we must begin something new.

At the start of today's gospel, the ending sounds kinda scary: Falling stars, the sun darkening and a moon that will no longer give its light. I think if we witnessed this taking place, my first reaction would be, "This going to be bad."

It is a first of all our reminder to be ready! The 2nd coming may or may not be in our lifetime, but one thing for sure it will happen in our individual lives that we will be confronted by Jesus at the end of our lives.

I have seen people die with complete peace because of how they lived their lives – always ready for that day. Others, perhaps not. Stalin, for example died in utter terror.

+Author Doug Mendenhall shares a brief parable that should cause all of us to pause and reflect: Jesus called the other day to say he was passing through and [wondered if] he could spend a day or two with us. I said, "Sure. Love to see you. When will you hit town?"

That's when Jesus told me he was actually at a convenience store out by the interstate. I must have gotten that Bambi-in-headlights look, because my wife hissed, "What is it? What's wrong? Who is that?"

So I covered the receiver and told her Jesus was going to arrive in eight minutes, and she ran out of the room and started giving guidance to the kids—in that effective way that Marine drill instructors give guidance to recruits. ...

My mind was already racing with what needed to be done in the next eight—no seven—minutes so Jesus wouldn't think we were reprobate loser slobs. I turned off the TV in the den, which was blaring some weird scary movie I'd been half watching. But I could still hear screams from our bedroom, so I turned off the reality show it was tuned to.

My wife had already thinned out the magazines that had been accumulating on the coffee table. She put Christianity Today on top for a good first impression.

Five minutes to go. I looked out the front window, but the yard actually looked good thanks to my long, hard work, so I let it go. What could I improve in four minutes anyway?

I did notice the mail had come, so I ran out to grab it. Mostly it was a bunch of catalogs tied into recent purchases, so I stuffed it back in the box. Jesus doesn't need to get the wrong idea—three minutes from now—about how much on-line shopping we do. I ran back in and picked up a bunch of shoes left by the door.

Tried to stuff them in the front closet, but it was overflowing with heavy coats and work coats and snow coats and pretty coats and raincoats and extra coats. We live in the South; why'd we buy so many coats? I squeezed the shoes in with two minutes to go.

I plumped up sofa pillows, my wife tossed dishes into the dishwasher, I scolded the kids, and she shooed the dog. With one minute left I realized something important: Getting ready for a visit from Jesus is not an eight-minute job. Then the doorbell rang. The lesson is when we see the stars falling, at the very end of life, it is too late to change.

I must admit I did have a bit of trouble with this homily. I mean, how do you tie in falling stars and like that would relate to you all's day to day living? Good chance most will not witness the sun darkening.

But then I thought, "It can be assimilated in symbolic ways." You yourselves might have experienced those periods in your life where it is darkened and was a bit scary. A loss of a star might be a loss of a job or someone you loved who passed.

The sun darkening in our lives might be struggles with depression. Maybe you are struggling with addiction in a very scary way or grades are sliding into very anxious areas. We might be thinking, "This is going to be bad."

We've seen our stars of the Catholic hierarchy fall from grace and the sun is not shining brightly on the Catholic faith. It has been bad and may get a bit worse when we have to hear of so much darkness that seeped through decades ago.

The thing is, it might be bad, but it is also can be an ending. As I said, with every ending can become a new beginning. Our beliefs did not end in the crucifixion, but with the resurrection. Hold on to your faith in Christ, in His Church, and the darkness will pass into light, because after all the tribulations comes Christ, be it at the end world, the end of an era of the Church or our individual lives he will emerge from it all.

We are followers of the Lord of life and He has shown us how to overcome all suffering, doubt, despair and darkness, even death itself. He has shown us that suffering is not the final reality, that evil will never triumph over good, that death will never have its final say.

We are people of promise, people who hope and trust in the goodness, mercy and love of our God. Endings do bring new beginnings and our God is waiting for our response, not our leaving or retreat.