

Take-Home Sheet | Session 12

The Olivet Discourse (Mark 13)

A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

What We Found

Seated on the Mount of Olives "opposite the temple", the mountain where Ezekiel watched God's glory withdraw, and where Zechariah put the LORD's feet on the day of judgment, Jesus answered the disciples' question about WHEN the temple would fall. His discourse, as Catholic interpreters have long read it, weaves two horizons: the destruction of Jerusalem, which came in A.D. 70, within that generation, a fulfillment the Church's interpreters have long recognized and his own coming in glory at the end. Flatten the two into one and you get every end-times panic in history; the discourse itself is explicitly ANTI-panic: "do not be alarmed... the end is not yet... this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs."

The great discovery: the prophets taught us to read the prophets. The darkened sun and falling stars of 13:24-25 are Isaiah's own idiom for the fall of BABYLON (Isaiah 13:10) and Edom (34:4), a kingdom's collapse in cosmic dress, fitting the temple-world's end, and open, at the far horizon, to the real consummation the Creed confesses. "The Son of Man coming in clouds" is Daniel 7:13, where he comes with clouds TO the Ancient of Days, to be enthroned and vindicated. And two honesty verses: "this generation" did see the temple fall; and "of that day or that hour no one knows... nor the Son, but only the Father", what the Son admitted not knowing, he was not sent to reveal (CCC 474), which forbids, forever, every date-setting industry. The last word of Jesus' public teaching: "What I say to you I say to all: WATCH", a doorkeeper at his post, "in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning." Keep those four underlined.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Augustine (Letter to Hesychius)

The Lord willed the day to remain hidden so that every day would be watched. The true lover of Christ's appearing is not the one who insists it is near, nor the one who insists it is far, but the one who waits for it, whether near or far, with sincere faith, firm hope, and burning love.

Voices of the Church: St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lecture 15)

We preach not one coming only but a second, far more glorious than the first. Do not chase those who whisper that the Christ has appeared in secret here or there: his return will need no rumor. Let the certainty of judgment make you diligent, not the guessing of its date.

Voices of the Church: Pope St. Gregory the Great (Homilies on the Gospels, Homily 1)

The world shows us its own aging, and its tribulations are messengers sent ahead, not to terrify the friends of God but to loosen their grip on what is passing. If the world we love is ending, love instead what does not end.

Live It This Week

- Get watch-ready the Catholic way: go to Confession this week, not someday, so that any hour the door opens is a good hour.
- At Mass, catch the prayer after the Our Father, "as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ", and pray it like you mean it.
- Retire one anxiety: write Mark 13:31 over the fear you have been treating as a countdown, and hand it to the only One who knows the day.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Mark 13:31, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Mark 14:1-15:15, slowly and prayerfully; it is the night of the Passion's beginning.

Catechism References

CCC 472-474, 668-677, 1040, 2612