

33rd Sunday in Ordinary time • B
November 14-15, 2009 • Christ the King

In 960 Bernard, a German visionary announced that the world would end on Good Friday in 992. It didn't. A group of London astrologers speculated that the world would end in February 1524. By mid-January, at least 20,000 people had left their homes for higher ground. Again the world did not end. Now there is a movie that predicts that the world will end in 2012 – the end of the Mayan calendar. There seems to be no country or culture in which these predictions have not occurred with unabated frequency. It seems that we human beings have a propensity for prophecies, even when these are disproved time and time again.

Have you noticed how many people there are who claim to tell your future; things like the Psychic network – for just a small per-minute charge they will tell you whatever you want to hear...

So, after consultation with my crystal ball,
I am prepared to make a few startling predictions.
Looking into my crystal ball, I see something quite large.
It appears to be ... a bulging ... stomach.
This is my first prediction:
someone in this church will eat too much on
Thanksgiving.
“Ah!” you say.
Are you ready for my second prediction?
I see a road and cars.
I predict that someone in this church will travel
this coming week.
Unbelievable, right?
Are you amazed yet?
I bet you are stunned by my ability to foresee
the destiny of others!

I will give you a third prediction of the future:
someone in this church will watch a television program
this week and then say, "That was a waste of time."
Do I hear you gasp at this amazing prophecy?
My talent is astounding, is it not?
And now, a fourth and final prediction:
I see a group of people shaking their heads.
My prediction is that there are people in this church
who doubt the gift I have for foretelling
the events of the future.
And you know ... they would be very smart people.

The future is fascinating and frightening because it is unknown.
Unfortunately, there are some people who spend so much
of their time and energy attempting to figure out their futures
that they never live in the present.

Today's gospel is clear.

Only God really knows the future,
and we must put our trust in God.

Yes, there are talented people who,
through their study of trends, history
and human behavior,

are able to make very reasonable guesses
about what is likely to happen.

They are experts in their fields,
and we count on them to help us decide
what is smart to invest in,
how to stop the spread of disease,
where the next set of highways should be built
and on and on.

But the end of the world and the moment
of our deaths are not matters that can be
determined by gazing into a crystal ball.

So, rather than searching a crystal ball, or calling the psychic network, our readings invite us to be prepared to recognize and welcome Christ. We are invited to search our hearts and minds, examine our words and works. Our first reading calls us to live wisely and justly in all that we are, in all we do. Our second reading calls us to be prepared by trusting in Jesus' saving sacrifice to forgive sins and to sanctify sinners. Hope and trust must wipe our worry; faith and fortitude must blot out fear.

Our challenge this week is to remain grounded in our belief in a loving God. As you gather around the table, either this altar or the one you gather around at Thanksgiving, remember to give thanks for God's gift of love and our call to live that love daily!