

At that time...

3 times we hear this in our 1st reading

What is that time?

It is a reference to the end times

For the Israelite nation, it was seen in the destruction of the Temple

For us, it is a reference to the 2nd coming of Christ

It is also a reference to our own death

When the world as we know it passes away

At that time...

As we go through life, we see partial fulfillment of the end

The Israelite nation saw it whenever they were conquered

They saw it in their being driven from the Holy Land

Our reading from Daniel was from such a time

The Babylon's had conquered the Holy Land

In fact, Daniel spent his entire life in the service of a foreign nation

They also saw a glimpse of the fulfillment of the promise

Each time they returned

We see glimpses of it when someone we know and love passes away

And we see the promise of the resurrection in each birth and baptism

New life and all the possibilities each one holds

At that time...

We know there will come a last time for the world
But when it comes is only for the Father to know
And we are called to be prepared
Not to live in fear
But to live in hope
The hope reflected in our psalm
You are my inheritance, O LORD
At that time...

Life is cyclical
Nature points to this
Our liturgy points to this
Our readings today point to this
Entering into winter reflects death
It calls to mind the end times
We are called to be conscious of this
Not to dwell on it
Not to be obsessed with death
But to look at reality
We are here for only a short time
But our time here has eternal consequences
How we live here determines our eternity

St Ambrose tells us we should ‘have a daily familiarity with death’

St Benedict calls us to ‘keep death always before our eyes’

There is even a small church in Rome I spoke of before

The inscription on the entrance

What you are, we once were

What we are you will be

Going in you find a church filled with human bones and skulls

Candle sticks and decorations

The altar and pulpit all made with human bones

Not as a morbid reminder

But as a call to reality

A call we need very much in our modern world

Where death is seen as something to be avoided at all costs

Even to the point where we don’t want to talk about it

We hardly want to think about it

Daniel speaks about this in our 1st reading

Those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken

The wise will shine like the stars

Some to life forever; some to horror

Our lives here do have eternal consequences

Because our death is only temporary

Like our nightly sleep

When we are really tired

Our head hits the pillow

And in what seems like an instant

The alarm rings in our ears

We open our eyes to a new day

We get a little dress rehearsal for death each night

We get a dress rehearsal for the resurrection each dawn

Why is it this way?

Mystery of life

Why are we here?

None of us made the choice even to live

Much less to live in this time

In this nation

To be born of these 2 particular parents

Into this family

Some good

Some not so much

We didn't choose our gifts and talents

We don't choose to leave this life either

God made life

Death is the cost of sin

Original sin brought death into the world

And not just for human beings
But to nature as well
Death was not and is not the plan of God
In Christ's second coming death itself will be destroyed
But God does allow it
And good can come about through death
St. Ambrose tells us '*Death is a remedy*'
It is a remedy for sin
Because after sin entered the world
Immortality would be more of a curse
It is only good if we can live in the fullness of God's presence
It is an act of mercy that our life here is short
Death is more than that
It is also our redemption
Our Easter proclamation calls Original Sin a *happy fault*
Because of Original Sin Christ became man
The Divine nature that is incapable of death
Took on human nature so it could die
Christ uses death as an act of love to the Father
An act of love lived in obedience
He died so we can live
Christ's obedience is the example we are called to follow

In our second letter today

St Paul speaks of the one sacrifice of Christ

Before Christ, sacrifices were offered daily

But they were limited to this world

And they reflected that in what was offered

The more serious the sin

Our the larger the group it was offered for

The more valuable the animal sacrificed

A bull would be offered for a nation

Or a pair of turtledoves offered for a poor individual

But they could not go beyond the here and now

Even the office of the high priest lasted only for this lifetime

But Christ changed all of that

His offering of himself

Offered once for all time changed everything

It even changed the priesthood

For now there is only one high priest

As priests today, we share or participate in his office

The sacrifice we offer is not a new sacrifice

We re-present his sacrifice

The sacrifice that stands in the presence of the Father

Outside of time

We enter into that at each Mass

Participating in the one offering of Christ

So we can participate in receiving his body and blood

With the disciples t the Last Supper

The Mass that began on that day in Jerusalem

Continues this day in Prairie du Chien

At that time...

We need to see this Gospel of Mark in context

This teaching of Jesus follows the disciples looking at the Temple

In all it shining beauty

And Jesus says there will come a time

Not one stone will be left on another

If that happens to the Temple of stone

What about the more precious temple of our bodies?

Nature shows us what to look for

The buds on the tree in the spring

New life given in birth

Becoming God's children in baptism

The growth and maturity during the summer months

Strong, young lives growing in their relationship with God

The fruit on the tree maturing

We will see this in a minute in the prayer offered over our gifts

Grant we pray

That what we offer in your sight

May obtain for us the grace of being devoted to You

And gain the prize of everlasting happiness

This maturing in our physical lives

Along with a maturing in our spiritual life

Then we see the leaves falling off the tree, preparing for winter

We see how short our life is

Even a hundred years is a tiny pencil point of eternity

And our faith tells us our lives do not end here

They are changed

And we will enter a new heaven and a new earth

The holy city where Christ is King

And we will dwell forever