

***Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time***  
***November 13, 2022***  
***Year of Saint Joseph***

*“Traditional institutions, laws and modes of thought and emotion do not always appear to be in harmony with today’s world. This has given rise to a serious disruption of patterns and even of norms of behavior.”*

*(Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican II, paragraph 7)*

All three Synoptic Gospels record this discussion of Jesus with His disciples outside of the Temple in Jerusalem. Many theologians point to three main ideas which can be reflected upon from this discussion. These are: (1) the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, (2) the signs that will be present before the end of the world and (3) the second coming of the Christ in His glory. Throughout Christian history, many a preacher have proposed a sermon upon one of these three themes. Most notably, the second and third themes, expressed in the apocalyptic images of the Book of Revelation, have been held in particular fondness. If we were to add all the books written and movies made concerning the End Times to the multitude of sermons preached and then add to that the moral and cultural decay found in our society, I think we could easily feel trapped. I use the word “trapped” purposefully, meaning we know the end is coming and we are helpless to avoid it. It is inevitable and we are powerless. Borrowing an example from the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, I would like to offer you something else to reflect upon which is also present in the discourse of Jesus—**Hope**. Specifically, the Hope which a Christian should possess because God is going to provide them with His assistance: “For I myself shall give you . . .”

Archbishop Sheen once likened modern man to an egg. Although it may not be the most flattering of examples, it sums up so many of our feelings quite nicely. As I said previously, we can feel trapped. The situations of the world around us can hem us in like the walls of an egg shell. We felt powerless as COVID raced around the world. Trapped behind our mask, we and those we love, interacted as best we could hoping not to become the next statistic on the nightly news. We watched as riots in other parts of our country and world raged. We listened to news commentators who stoked fears between our fellow citizens using vile, inflammatory rhetoric. Yes, these and so many more examples trapping us in the oppressive eggshell.

On that cheery note, Archbishop Sheen would remind us that an eggshell is broken in one of two ways. The first is from without, meaning from a force outside of the egg. I spoke in a recent homily of the fall of Rome, invaded from without by various barbarian tribes. Our modern society, an institution, a person, any of these can be broken by barbarism; those forces seeking to destroy everything in their path in the name of a personal or political ideology. Turn on your television or computer and see how one of the most important things we all value, Trust, has been torn asunder. We no longer have the same trust as our parents and grandparents had in either institutions or those persons governing these.

Yet, an eggshell can be broken a second way, from within. We see this when a chick slowly pecks the eggshell actively seeking release into the world. Now, the chick instinctually knows its freedom lies on the outside of the shell. We have not been blessed with that instinctual knowledge. The slow pecking of the shell which binds us can only be accomplished when we become aware that we are in the egg. And how do we become aware of our position, either inside or outside the egg? Only the Holy Spirit can make us aware of that. And here lies the Hope we have during these times. Jesus promises His Presence and the Holy Spirit's Guidance. By taking the time to see the world, listening to what is being said, quietly reflecting upon these things, asking for and being open to the Holy Spirit's Guidance in our prayer, then and only then, will we begin to know upon which side of the shell are we currently located. Jesus promised freedom to those who followed His call. He did not promise an easy road to that freedom, but He did promise God's assistance along the road that leads us there.