

33rd Sunday B November 15, 2015

Imagine the churches in Paris this weekend—crowded for a change. Catholics angry, fearful, stunned. 128 shot dead, the blood of hundreds staining the streets in their great city—guarded, but still vulnerable to the weapons of just six young killers.

Paris is a very flat city. On top of the only hill in town, stands a wonderful, “new” basilica. (In Europe, “new” means 100 year old.) It’s called “Sacre Couer”—Sacred Heart. Tourists visit Sacre Couer, and in the back of church they are invited to pick up a little card. Which says, “There is Someone here whom you know and love.”

“There is Someone here...” People need to know that when the old familiar world seems to be ending, and the new is not under our control.

We are at the end of the Church year—just two weeks before Advent—and the readings and prayers invite us to reflect on the end of the world, that hard-to-imagine moment when the victorious Christ will come in glory to take to heaven the living and the dead who belong to him.

“There is Someone here.” We humans need to remember that, because every Paris, every disaster, can begin to feel like the end.

The Jews needed to remember that in 70 AD, when the Romans leveled the great Temple to the ground. The Temple, thought to be indestructible, built on stones so huge we still don’t know how they were put in place—destroyed by the Roman armies.

“There is someone here whom you know and love.” 1938 brought the Holocaust: six million innocent Jews exterminated by Hitler’s armies in

his search for a pure race. Some of them believed that the Lord was with them, but others shouted, "Where is God?" "Where is God?"

And now ISIS, spread into many countries, is able to terrorize Paris. Who knows where next? Do we really believe that our military might makes our country secure?

At every Mass, we pray "thy Kingdom come." And we pray that because there is a great struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil, a great struggle between love and hate, light and darkness. We see it on the news, we feel it in our own hearts.

To state the obvious, God is doing fine. And it is Christian belief that at some point, Jesus Christ will return in power and glory, evil will end, and there will be a new heavens and a new earth.

Today's Letter to the Hebrews says that Christ is "waiting." What is he waiting for before he returns? Perhaps He is waiting for you and me to become people of the light, people of love and goodness. Perhaps he is waiting for a few more souls to turn to Him.

In France, President Francois Allende said that France will prevail. Maybe, But someday, somehow, we know that God will prevail.

Meanwhile, whatever the crisis, I try to hold on to that card from Sacre Couer: "There is someone here whom you know and love."