

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE FESTIVAL OF HOLY CROSS
(SEPTEMBER 17TH 2006)

Dearly beloved:

Next Sunday, September 17th is the First Sunday after the Festival of Holy Cross. The Holy Gospel reading for this Sunday tells about Jesus instructing His disciples to learn a lesson from the fig tree. In addition, He tells them that the heaven and earth will pass away, but His words will never pass. Another parable He was narrating is about a master who leaves his home and gives his servants specific responsibilities and orders them not to go to sleep on the job.

What can fig trees teach us about the coming of God's kingdom? The fig tree was a common and important source of food for the Jews. The prophet Joel mentions its fruit bearing as a sign of favor from the Lord. It bore fruit twice a year, in the autumn and in the early spring. The Jews believed that when the Messiah came He would usher in the kingdom of God at Passover time. The Talmud (Jewish religious law) said that the first fruit came the day after Passover. This parable foretells the joy of new life in the God's Kingdom.

Jesus tells us that one thing is certain: that this world as we know it will not last, but that is not the end. When the Lord Jesus returns again in glory, He will bring the kingdom of God in all its fullness. Then, as the Book of Revelations tells us, there will be a "new heaven and a new earth" in which "death shall be no more". That is why all the Christians are praying, "Come, Lord Jesus quickly". While we do not know the date or time for the second coming, His words last because He is faithful and He keeps his promises.

The bible tells us a frightening portrayal of the everlasting suffering of those who have rejected the gospel. Jesus speaks of two judgments that will come. One in the near future, the second much later. These are the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the second coming, whenever that may be. His disciples had been admiring the magnificent temple in Jerusalem and Jesus informed them that it would be totally destroyed, "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down". Jesus words were fulfilled in A.D. 70, when the Romans under Titus destroyed Jerusalem, its inhabitants and the temple buildings.

"Lord, may Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Awaken our heart and mind to receive Your word and to prepare for Your coming again".

Please read the following Bible verses, in preparation for this Sunday's commemoration.

Bible readings for Sunday, September 17th, 2006.

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Before Holy Qurbana:

Genesis	-	42: 1-28
Psalms	-	34: 1-22
Isaiah	-	1: 10-20

Holy Qurbana

General Epistles:	Acts	-	3: 21-26
Epistles of St. Paul:	I Corinthians	-	2: 10-16
Holy Gospel:	St. Mark	-	13: 28-37

With prayers,
Thomas Alex