

# A Bible Bullet (aimed at the heart)

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B  
Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32

In order that we may approach the meaning of the Gospel reading this week within the fullest context of its historical background, I defer to the scriptural expertise of Sr. Joan Mitchell, CSJ, who writes a weekly commentary called Sunday by Sunday. Sister has cautioned the faithful to consider events that influenced Mark as he wrote.

It is important to remember that although Mark seems to be writing at the time that Jesus was on earth, this is not the case. Mark was actually writing around 70 AD. Some significant elements of history influenced his style and message.

In 66 AD, a group of Jewish revolutionist began a rebellion against occupying Rome. This civil strife lasted for about four years. The Roman government finally had its fill of the unrest. The Roman army surrounded the city of Jerusalem with the intent to starve the citizens into surrender. Ultimately, the city was attacked and the temple was completely destroyed leaving not a stone upon a stone. Sister Joan writes:

*To topple the temple, soldiers laid fires to boil the water in temple cisterns. The heat pushed 60-ton stones out of their places in the foundations. Today only the western foundation wall survives, the holiest of sites for Jews where they daily gather to pray.*

The fires that were set also caused the huge solid gold grape vines that adorned the temple exterior to melt into the fallen stones of the collapsed walls. People seeking the gold finished the job of not leaving a stone unturned.

Mark then was writing to people who were terrified by the events of the time. They were people in desperate need of courage to face the calamity of the time and the persecutions of the near future.

Each of us fears something. These fears change as our lives change. What may have been a fear for a parent of young children changes through the years as our challenges change and wisdom tells us how little control we have over anything except our choices. Our fears may be outside of us or burning within us. We are called, as were the early believers of Mark's time, to put our trust in God knowing that all is in His hands.

As fear fills your hearts this week, in preparation for Sunday's Liturgy, claim for yourselves the passage from Mark 5:36 "Fear is useless; what is needed is trust." Our greatest and only true power rests in this trust.