

Salford Office for Liturgy

"He will gather his chosen from the four winds."

The Word This Week

As always at this time of year, we begin to contemplate the end of the world - a theme that carries us over next Sunday's feast (Christ the King) and so into Advent. Such a contemplation is not gloomy or morbid: throughout the ages (and especially in the early days) Christians have been utterly positive about the coming end of all things, because we know what will happen, and in fact we earnestly desire it to come: the phrase that gives this away is in the Gospel: "Then... he will send his angels to gather his chosen from the four winds." This gathering of God's children together will be a truly wonderful event, when we will all be completely enfolded in that love of God that we talk so much about.

Notes for Readers

First Reading: Daniel 12:1-13

The tone of this reading is interesting: in one sense it is very flat – almost like a newspaper report – but at the same time has immense color and drama. It is as if the drama is slightly removed from the account, which is very measured and controlled. This is not a "repent, the end is nigh" sort of text, but a calmer statement of the facts of what will happen. The impact of the reading will be greater if it is delivered with clarity and conviction, rather than great drama or histrionic enthusiasm. This does not mean, however, that it should be read without any expression at all: there are some marvelous phrases which call for great warmth – such as *"your own people will be spared..."* or *"the learned will shine..."*, and the reader should do his or her best to create that feeling of hope or comfort that these words are meant to evoke in the listeners. That these are the important ideas is made clear by the 'thematic title' you always find at the top, just under the biblical reference: this short verse (which you should never read out loud) always points out the key content of the whole reading, and is there to help the reader judge the emphasis correctly.

Second Reading: Hebrews 10:1-14.18

In this, our final selection from Hebrews, the author underlines all he has been saying about the priesthood of Jesus Christ in recent weeks. The perfect offering or sacrifice has brought about eternal perfection. So today, when we celebrate Mass, that one single sacrifice of Christ is present to us, so that we may share in the eternal perfection it achieved. As with all these readings from Hebrews, this should be delivered carefully and slowly, so that people can follow the rather intricate argument being developed. If it is gabbled rapidly, the congregation will be lost by line three. Take your time, and emphasize each point along the way.