

One of our oldest parishioners confided in me this week that she's been thinking a lot about her funeral lately. "Is that bad, Father?" she wanted to know. I said, "No, I don't think that's such a bad thing. It helps the family and the community if you've made some preparations for your funeral." She said, "It makes me peaceful to think about it." I said, "Sounds fine." Then as I started to leave she asked, "Father, did you watch the Chiefs last Sunday?" I said, "They looked terrible." She said, "That Gannon, they didn't give him any protection." I said, "I'll bet he's been thinking a lot about his funeral too."

Jesus talks to his disciples today about the ultimate funeral, the end of the world. Most people don't want to think about it. We have enough trouble just thinking about the end of today. Jesus promised that the world would not end in bleakness and destruction, but that he would return as the Son of Man, render judgment, and offer an eternal reward. In his teaching, the end of the world is just another step into history, which will advance further into the glorious reign of God. If his disciples knew where all life was headed, they could take some steps to get there peacefully.

Thinking about our own death is difficult, but it's important to live with one eye fixed on the goal. We already do it in many simple ways: we fasten a seatbelt, we go for a checkup, we pay into life insurance. Those actions cause us to hear the ever-advancing footsteps of death. But there are many more ways that we can make sensible preparations. Do you have a will, so that what you own can go to family and charity and not just to the state? Do you have a pre-need funeral plan? Do you own a gravesite? Are there things about your funeral Mass you want us to know? When did you last celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation? Are there fences you want to mend before you die? If you're eligible for the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, when did you last receive it? When did you last tell your family you love them? I'm sure the disciples did not want to think about the end Jesus was describing. We don't like to think about our own end, but there are things we can do to approach death more peacefully.