

Be Ready!

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19, 64:1-7;

Psalm 80;

1 Corinthians 1:3-9;

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples:
“Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crow or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

God reads our hearts. He knows how hard it is for us to stay alert interiorly, caught up, as we are, in the dizzying rhythm of daily life, which is crammed full of study, work, family and various commitments. Because of this, today's reminder is helpful. The command, “Be alert!” and its synonym, “Be watchful!” appear four times in today's Gospel reading—an indication that this is a fundamental message Jesus wants to communicate to us. There are many ways to be vigilant: some people remain alert because they don't want to be caught off guard—they don't want anything unexpected to happen because they are satisfied with things the way they are and want that situation to continue. Others are vigilant because something is supposed to happen and they want to make sure it does. The first type of vigilance is defensive, the second, anticipatory. Both sentinels are alert and are looking toward the horizon but only the second sentinel, who keeps watch to ensure that what is supposed to happen actually does, is able to transform situations. He/she rejoices at the change that takes place, prepares the path for the future and fulfills promises with the grace of God.

We are called to be sentinels. We are called to keep our senses alert so as to discern life and events. We are called to keep our eyes open because the Lord is coming and we yearn to meet him. This longing allows us to savor in anticipation the joy of his presence: “The One who is coming” is near; he is coming to dwell among us!

God wants to meet you where you are; he loves you as you are. Every moment can be the “right moment,” the “favorable time,” for this encounter: every day, every activity is a precious occasion for allowing the Lord to come into your life. While you are waiting, seek him. Live your day with this desire. If you do, then it doesn't matter if God hides himself for awhile, if he delays, or if he reveals himself to you when you least expect it: in the tenderness of a newborn child, or in a voice that calls you, or by means of an incomprehensible cross. Your heart will always be ready to recognize and welcome him.

Show us, Lord, your love; and grant us your salvation.

“Sometimes we are hard of heart and hard of mind. We are forgetful, distracted and carried away by the limitless possibilities for consumption and distraction offered by contemporary society. This leads to a kind of alienation at every level, for a society becomes alienated when its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer the gift of self and to establish solidarity between people” (EG 196).