

First Sunday of Advent Homily

Mark 13:33-37

Today we begin the season of Advent. Advent means waiting or coming, and we wait for the coming of someone we love. During this season, we focus on waiting for the Lord, waiting for the coming of Jesus. We have the three fold waiting. We know that Jesus has already come in history and we remember that, during the week before Christmas, our waiting changes to waiting for our celebration of the birth of Jesus. We also wait for His final coming at the end times when He will take all to Himself. We also experience His daily coming into our life through the Eucharist, the word of God, and also in the various persons and events of life.

Waiting is something very important in the life of human person. Any time we wait, we do so because we expect something to happen or someone to come. In our daily routine of life we wait for something to take place, maybe we wait for a friend, for a bus or a train, and there is the eagerness within us that makes us look forward to something new that will take place. During Advent, we look forward to Jesus, who will come in a total gesture of love: God becomes man.

Today's readings assure us that the Lord is coming. The season of Advent begins with a warning from Jesus to his disciples, to be watchful and to be alert. Today's gospel is speaking on the level of the future and present comings of Jesus. The key word placed before us is 'readiness'. He calls on his disciples to be on their guard and to stay awake, because they never know when the time will come.

Jesus gives a parable about a man travelling abroad. He does two things: He gives various responsibilities to his servants to be carried out while he is away, and he warns the doorkeeper to be vigilant. Jesus tells each one of us to stay awake, because no one knows when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn. If he comes unexpectedly, he must not find his chosen one asleep and not at all prepared. Therefore he asks all to stay awake and alert. Readiness is not only for the end, but also for the daily stream of experiences that make up our ordinary day. Jesus is always there.

We are supposed to do our tasks with diligence and loyalty. Every moment has an eternal significance, so the disciple should be on guard. The servants who remain casual in their behavior and make a guess about their master's return from a journey may well be found regretting their behavior. The point Jesus makes here is clear and simple. Live each day as if it were the final day of the master's arrival

from his journey. This is not done with high anxiety and uncertainty, but with the calm conviction that whenever the master comes, the servant will be ready. This, in fact, is the message of Advent.

Life messages: 1) An Advent project of being alert and watchful is the spirit of today's gospel. Every morning when we get up, let us pray, "Lord, show me someone today with whom I may share your love, mercy, and forgiveness." Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, "Whatever you do in your family, for your children, for your husband, for your wife, you do for Jesus." Every night when we go to bed, let us ask ourselves, "Where have I found Christ today?" The answer will be God's Advent gift to us that day. By being alert and watchful, we will receive an extra gift: Christ himself. We need to be more spiritually wakeful and prepare for our eternal life because we can die any day, and that is the end of the world for us. Let this Advent season be the time of such a preparation for us. Let us remember the saying of St. Thomas Aquinas: "Without God, I can't. Without me, He won't."

2) "Maran atha" (Rev. 22: 20) is an Aramaic (Syriac) expression that means: "Come, Lord Jesus." It was used as a greeting in the early church. When believers gathered or parted, they didn't say hello or goodbye, but "Maran atha!" If we had the same spiritual outlook today, it would revolutionize the church and the lives of its members during this Advent season. Let us pray to Jesus to help us always to be prepared for his second coming.