

## THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT YEAR A

### THEME: **STAY AWAKE AND BE PREPARED**

Today we begin a new liturgical year and a new season of the Church's liturgical calendar. The season of Advent is a time when we prepare to commemorate the first coming of Jesus into the world. That is what we do at Christmas. But the Church uses the season of Advent also to remind us about the need for us to be prepared for the second coming of Christ. That is what today's liturgy is all about.

In the first reading, Isaiah anticipated the first coming of the Lord. He made a passionate appeal to the Israelites to be in communion with God: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!" He said that through the Lord's coming, the relationship between God and mankind will be transformed; the world will become a better place. The distressed and downtrodden will have reason to believe again and to hope again. The Church of God will gain prominence: The darkness of sin and ignorance will be dispelled. People will learn God's ways and follow his steps.

In the second reading, St. Paul continues the passionate appeal. He considers the second meaning of Advent, the second and final coming of Christ in glory. He is telling us as he told the Romans that it is high time we woke up from the sleep of attachment to sinful habits and live in the daylight of holiness. We need to be prepared, for the Lord is coming at an hour we do not expect. We must give up the desires of the flesh: orgies, drunkenness, promiscuity, lust, rivalry, gossip and jealousy. St. Paul encourages us to throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Jesus in the Gospel reading continues the Advent's passionate appeal by telling us to stay awake and be prepared, for the Son of Man will come at an hour we do not expect. The usual attitude is to relax and procrastinate: There is still time, I am still young, I have to enjoy my youth to the fullest, and when I'm old I will draw closer to God. There is a saying among my people that procrastination is the first child of the devil. Jesus is saying that we need to do whatever we have to do now, so as to be at peace with God, because tomorrow may not be there.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the season of Advent offers us another opportunity for a fresh start. We could use this year's Advent to begin a new relationship with God and our neighbors; or to deepen our already existing relationships; or to restore the broken ones. It is usual for us to have our homes illuminated by beautiful decorative lightings during this time. Let this practice not be mere beautification; let the lights be sacramental indication of an interior transformation of our personal and family lives. We are called to light up our lives. We have to know that Jesus is the reason for the season. He is Lord not just for the visible and physical; but Lord of the body and soul. So, the regular external preparations- advent wreath, shopping, exchange of cards and planning vacation with friends are important but more attention should be paid on the spiritual aspect.

Finally, the season of Advent calls for a change in our life style. We normally plan our schedule and fit many things into it, the things that are important to us. As we begin the Advent season today, we need to reflect on the following questions: Are the Lord and our faith at the top of our agenda this season? Are our prayers and spirituality among our top priorities on the list? What plan do we have for God and his Church during this season?

As we prepare for the Lord's coming, let us ask him to bless our preparations, so that he will meet our lives ready for him.