



Bringing Home the Word +

First Sunday of Advent (A)
December 1, 2019

Get Ready to Encounter Jesus

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Staying awake is a frequent and important Advent theme. Jesus mentions being awake in today's Gospel and again in Matthew 25:13 and 26:38. In Jesus' time on earth, it was common to have a servant posted at the door to protect you through the night and to watch over the house in your absence.

We are to ready ourselves to encounter Jesus at our personal judgment and again in the Final Judgment. Like a

watchman who stands over the city or a guard who protects the entry gate, we are to be vigilant, "for you do not know on which day your Lord will come."

Begin your Advent preparations by receiving Christ in the Eucharist, "for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11). Jesus is not far away but very near. He enters our hearts in the form of bread and wine. Are you ready, or will he catch you by surprise? +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 2:1-5

They shall beat their swords into plowshares / and their spears into pruning hooks.

Romans 13:11-14

Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light.

Matthew 24:37-44

[Jesus said,] "So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."



*Like a watchman
who stands over the city
or a guard who
protects the entry gate,
we are to be vigilant.*



A Word from Pope Francis

We can ask ourselves: Is this sacrament fulfilled in me? More concretely: Do I just like to be served at the Lord's table or do I get up to serve like the Lord?... And as a Church let us ask ourselves: After receiving Communion many times, have we become people of communion?

—Eucharistic concelebration,
April 20, 2018



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

A graphic element for the Reflection Questions section, featuring the word "QUESTIONS" in a stylized, mirrored font within a dark rectangular box, with the word "REFLECTION" below it.

- What can I do to prepare myself and my family for Christ's coming on Christmas?
- How do I prepare for Christ's coming in the Eucharist, and at other times in my life?

Living the Liturgical Year

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

Our Catholic identity is shaped by the way we read the Bible. And we read Scripture in a special way: It's called the liturgical year, with today being the first Sunday of that new year.

This annual cycle of feasts and seasons is not primarily about decorations (when to display the poinsettias and the lilies). Nor is it simply a way to add variety to the Mass so that it isn't repetitive (some days the priest wears green, other days, purple). The liturgical year is about much more all-inclusive issues. The liturgical year enables us to celebrate the whole mystery of Christ.

The Bible is our living contact with the mystery of Christ. The way we Catholics officially read Scripture creates our liturgical year. For example, the day on which we read the resurrection account becomes Easter. The day when we proclaim Christ's birth becomes Christmas Day.

The original, most important Catholic feast day is Sunday—the Lord's day. Jews find identity in Sabbath rest; Muslims, in Jumu'ah, the Friday prayer. We Catholics find identity in the Sunday eucharistic assembly. The Bible emphasizes the bond between the Lord's day and the Lord's Supper. While our contemporary understanding of Sunday has incorporated elements of Sabbath



rest, Sunday retains its original meaning as a day of assembly. On the Lord's day we gather with fellow Catholics and celebrate his paschal victory, the Eucharist.

Biblical Tradition

At Mass on Sundays and holy days during years called A, B, and C, the Church proclaims some

500 passages of the Bible from each book of the Old and New Testaments. The Church year enables us to hear from all the books of Scripture.

There are two ways in which the Church decides which passages of the Bible to proclaim. Imagine one of your favorite novels, books of poetry, or inspirational essays. You might read from beginning to end. Or, especially after you are familiar with the book, you might pick out certain passages that correspond to a situation you are experiencing.

The Church reads the Bible in both of these ways. On some Sundays the Church selects the passages based on the theme. This manner of selection creates the liturgical seasons of Easter and Christmas. On the other Sundays the Church reads various books of the Bible from beginning to end.

The liturgy enables us to pass from our past-present-future timeframe to enter into God's time of salvation so that the grace and mystery proclaimed in the

Scripture readings are made present. An old spiritual asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Yes, I was there! Or, more accurately, I am there now! At the Easter Vigil we sing, "This is the night when Jesus Christ rose triumphant from the grave." We don't sing, "We remember the night long ago when...." We sing, "This is the night!"

Jesus: Alive Again

We Catholics today are not disappointed because all the wonderful events of Christ's life happened long ago. The liturgical year enables us to be present to those events now. The liturgical year makes the mysteries of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection present in a mysterious way so that Christians of every generation can come into contact with them and be enriched by their graces.

No single celebration can do justice to the mystery of Christ. The liturgical year enables us to experience the events of Christ in a Catholic, all-embracing way so that we can enter into the mysteries and be enriched by God's saving love. +

PRAYER

Lord, give me the courage to disarm my heart from the feelings of anger, resentment, and revenge that foster so much pain and division in my life. Instill in me a spirit of gratitude and joy that I may become your instrument of peace and reconciliation whenever conflicts arise.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 2–7

Monday, Advent Weekday:
Is 4:2–6 / Mt 8:5–11

Tuesday, St. Francis Xavier:
Is 11:1–10 / Lk 10:21–24

Wednesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 25:6–10a / Mt 15:29–37

Thursday, Advent Weekday:
Is 26:1–6 / Mt 7:21, 24–27

Friday, Advent Weekday:
Is 29:17–24 / Mt 9:27–31

Saturday, St. Ambrose:
Is 30:19–21, 23–26 / Mt 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6–8

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