

1st Sunday of Advent

Is 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

I Cor. 1:3-9

Mk 13:33-37

A few weeks ago I received an email from my friend with a picture attached. I clicked on the attachment, and it opened up a very dramatic picture. It was a young man dead in his car from a drug overdose. The car was parked beside a parking meter which read “time expired.” He ran out of time and ran out of life. We get closer to eternity with every ticking of the clock. Therefore, Jesus warns us through the Gospel reading, “Be watchful and alert. You don’t know when the time will come.” The Lord will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour. We should be like the servant who is prepared and ready for the master.

“Be prepared and watchful” is the theme for the first Sunday of Advent as we are reminded of the Lord’s second coming and are preparing to celebrate His first coming once again. We should always be mindful of the Lord’s second coming. The Church gives us the season of Advent as a special time to remind us of the Lord’s second coming. As we go about, busy doing our daily works, it is very likely that we lose sight of the Lord’s promise of His second coming. We lose sight of eternity, our daily prayers get neglected, and Church attendance becomes irregular. We fall into temptations easily, we let into our lives things that are unchristian, we begin to have less self-control, and we appear to be very busy. These are signs that tell us we are heading in the wrong direction. A few days ago, I was in the Costco parking lot. I saw a car bumper sticker that read: “Jesus is coming soon, look busy.” Some of us like to look busy or even keep busy just to keep our minds away from things that are truly important and need attention.

Let us always be watchful and alert as to what is happening in our lives. Let us be prepared for the coming of the Lord. A good daily examination of conscience is a tremendous help in our preparedness. What if there is a warning of a hurricane? What if there is a warning of a tsunami? What if the scientists warn of an earthquake measuring 8.5 next week? We would prepare and take every precaution imaginable. The Lord tells us that He is coming soon. But we do not pay enough attention or prepare. Today’s readings remind us that, along with our spiritual preparation for Christmas, we should also be prepared and ready to meet Jesus at all times—whether at the end of our lives or at the end of the world—whichever comes first.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah makes a profound diagnosis of the ills of his people. They are sinful, they are unclean, their good deeds are like polluted rags, they are filled with guilt, and there is no one who calls upon the name of the Lord. These are strong words. The people listened to Isaiah. Advent is a time when we have to make a good diagnosis of ourselves, and then act on our findings. That is the best

way we can prepare for Christmas. Let us not be Christians by habit. Let us shake off the dust of routine, habit, indifference, and neglect to let Christ come alive in our lives once more.