

November 26, 2022 – First Sunday of Advent
Advent: A New Awareness
Gospel of Matthew 24:37-44
Fr. John

At the beginning of today's second reading from his letter to the Romans, Paul says'...you know what time it is - how it is now the moment for you to wake up from sleep'. Well, he wasn't referring to some hour of the day but rather a deeper awakening from a sleep that most of us fall into - brought on by our viewing of life in a rather tedious manner.

It's often been said that the liturgical season of Advent is a time of waiting and anticipation for the celebration of Christ's birth - the Nativity. And while that is true, we might be lulled into a kind of 'waiting room' mentality where nothing much is happening until the 25th of December arrives or in the bigger scheme of things, Jesus returns at the end of time in all his glory.

But the season of Advent has specialness and a message of its own. Sometimes our dislike of waiting distracts us from the fact that God is already here and present among us and has been since the creation of the universe some 13 and a half billion years ago, if science is at all accurate. And we are living in the experience of that creation.

The problem is that often we are unaware of that reality like fish swimming in the ocean wondering where the water is. In fact it is all around us and within us - if only we would wake up to that fact!

All life, our environment, and each human being is a miracle. And yet too often our eyes and our minds glaze over as we sleep walk through life.

In all three readings today from Isaiah, Paul, and the gospel of Matthew, we are urged to pay attention to the present moment and be aware of the presence of God in even the most repeated and routine of our experiences. Every moment is an opportunity to connect with God in a way that just might result in a change in our attitudes, values, and actions.

Perhaps Advent beckons us to once again see life through the eyes of a small child who takes delight in experiencing his or her surroundings. Sometimes small children can teach us adults to look at familiar things until they become unfamiliar - filled with a sense of awe, wonder, and mystery.

Perhaps that's why Jesus would say that unless we become like little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Advent is the Church's invitation to see things anew - to awaken us to the deeper mysteries of the world in which we move and live and have our very being.

If we are waiting for something extraordinary to happen we may miss the extraordinary in the so-called 'ordinary'. Or to use a more secular analogy - if we're only looking for the Santa Claus float, we may miss the rest of the parade!

So may we not let Advent slip by unnoticed or simply as a prelude to Christmas but rather appreciate it for its own sake - a re-awakening to the simple joys that God places before us everyday.

Even apart from the religious sphere, many specialists in the field of mental health tell us that it is healthy to live in the present moment and seize the day [Carpe Diem].

Perhaps to help us in this, we are again putting out the little blue books for Advent for daily prayer and reflection. Something may twig in us and reawaken us from our 'spiritual sleep'.

As scripture exhorts us and reflected in the familiar hymn, City of God:
'Awake from Your slumber; Arise from your sleep; A new day is dawning ...'