

1st Advent: Mk 13:33- 37

When I was a child, one of my favorite game was Hide and Seek. Having no video games and having 9 nine children in your home, this was the most poplar game in our home. If you have ever played the game, you will remember that the person who was "it" closed his eyes while the rest went to hide. To give them time to hide, the "it" started counting: 5, 10, 15, 20 and up to 100. Then he would say, "Ready or not, here I come!" The point of the game was to hide oneself so well that the leader could not find you, for if he found you, and beat you back to the goal, you had to be "it" the next go-around. The secret of the game was preparing oneself against being found and caught. With excitement we heard the words, "Ready or not -- here I come!" In today's Gospel lesson Jesus is saying to the world, "Ready or not -- here I come." In chapter 13 of Mark, Jesus tells us that he will be returning to the earth "with great power and glory." As in the game, only this is not a game, there is a counting and an accounting going on right now. It is a countdown before the blast of his appearance on earth a second time to judge the world and to gather his faithful to himself.

In our modern day, if we ask people, name two of the hardest thing of the day, many people would say the hardest tasks each day are to get up and to go to bed. These are not two different problems; they are really two sides of the same coin. Why it is too hard to get up; because we don't go to bed on time. Because we don't go to bed on time, we don't get up on time either. The fundamental problem behind these two problems is just one: we are so distracted in today's world. And since we don't get up and go to bed on time: the whole day is ruined and our work

efficiency is ruined. Distracted and disorganized in every way. That can be dangerous and disastrous.

A group of young people went to visit a famous Guru well known for his wisdom. To test his wisdom a young asked the Guru, “Master I want to be in heaven after my death. So how many days before my death shall I prepare for that?” Immediately Guru replied, “One day before the death.” This was an unexpected answer for the young man. Still he braved to ask, “But, how I will know when I am going to die?” In a calm voice Guru replied, “Since we do not know the time start preparing right now. The time is now to organize our lives with right priorities.”

Like the great spiritual teachers of all times Jesus kept saying, "Wake up!" Advent is the season when we hear that wake-up call repeatedly. Jesus in today's gospel tells us, "Keep alert and watch, for you do not know when the time will come." This is not to instill fear in us but to inspire us to take up Gospel values. Today we start the first week of Advent. Traditionally Advent is considered a preparation for the coming of Christ: the coming of Christ in flesh – Christmas and the second coming of Christ at the end of times.

As we begin our Advent season we hear Jesus reminding us: Be watchful! Be alert! Awake! Today's readings help us to set stage for this Advent season. In the first reading Prophet Isaiah acknowledges God as Father forever and Redeemer. He prays to God to come down for the sake of your servants. People have gone astray and hardened their hearts. Without you we have all withered like leaves. You are the potter and you can make us anew and you can make us beautiful vessels.

In the Gospel Jesus speaks about the master going abroad leaving the house to his servants, giving to each one some responsibility. We have been given a task to carry out when master is away. Our responsibility is our own sanctification and sanctification of others. The house of the master is placed in our responsibility; to do good make our world a better place.

The time is now to ‘watch and pray’ to put our priorities in order, to know the will of the Master in our lives. The time is now to ‘love and share.’ As Christians we can never walk alone, for we belong to the human family. Hence if we want Christ to come into our lives in living dynamic way, then during Advent our “hearts must overflow with love for one another and for all” (1 Thes 3:12)

The end time for each one may come at any time. In today’s parable Jesus tells us ‘You don’t know when the Lord of the house will come in the evening or at midnight.’ Not only at the end times, but he comes to us every moment to enrich us, to strengthen us, to give his love. In this Advent season let us be aware of the Lord coming into our lives. Let us place our lives in the hands of the great potter, the great Artist. He will make it a work of Art! A masterpiece!

Therefore, as disciples of Christ, we should live in the living presence of Jesus every day waiting for his Second Coming. We can experience Christ’s living presence in the Holy Eucharist, in the Holy Bible, in our worshiping community in our parish, in our family, in our own souls and in everyone around us. The early Christians experienced it, and that is why the mutual greeting among Christians was not “Hi!” or “Good Morning!” but the Aramaic, “*Maran Atha*” which means “Come, Lord Jesus.” This greeting acknowledged Jesus present in each of them and about to return. God bless you and keep you ever prepared for Christ’s second coming.