

THEME: ***“THEREFORE, STAY AWAKE!”***

On this first Sunday in Advent, the Church begins a new Liturgical Year. In today’s gospel reading, Jesus tells us to stay awake because we do not know when He will come. The coming of the Lord is understood in two senses – his coming as man in the incarnation, which we commemorate at Christmas, and the Parousia, that is, His second coming, when *He will come to judge the living and the dead*. For the second coming, He urges us to stay awake and be prepared, for He would come at an hour we do not expect. He told his disciples that *“As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man...”* The people were preoccupied with worldly affairs, paying no attention

to the Lord's commands. Consequently, they all perished as the flood came and carried them away. And he said something very thought-provoking. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. But the question that comes to mind is: will I be the one taken or left? And if I am the one left, then the question is: why? Song: *Will you be ready when...*

The exact hour of his coming is not the most important thing. What is most important is that we do not ignore the call to conversion, so that we are not surprised by his return. But how are we to stay awake and prepare for the Lord's coming so that we are not taken unawares? St. Paul writing to the Thessalonians admonishes them in these

words: “*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. For you are all children of light and children of the day. We are not of night, nor of darkness*” (cf. 1 Thess. 5:4-5). In fact, in today’s second reading, writing to the Romans, he exhorts us to wake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. But what exactly does he want us to do as we await the Lord’s coming? He says: “*Let us...throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.*” By our baptism, we have put on Christ and have been made children of the

light; and so, we must cast out the fruitless works of darkness and walk always in Christ's Light. It is only when we live as children of the light that we will be able to rejoice at the invitation of the Psalmist: "*Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord...*" or the invitation of the Prophet Isaiah in the first reading: "*Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob...and walk in his paths.*" It is only when we live as children of light and walk in His paths that we can truly live in tranquility and peace with one another: "...*one nation shall not raise a sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.*"

The story was once told of a wise old Rabbi who instructed his students by asking questions. He asked, "*How can a*

person tell when the darkness ends and the day begins?”

After thinking for a moment, one student replied, *“It is when there is enough light to see an animal in the distance and be able to tell if it is a sheep or a goat.”* Another student ventured: *“It is when there is enough light to see a tree, and tell if it is a fig or an oak tree.”* The old Rabbi gently said, *“No. It is when you can look at another’s face and recognize him or her as your brother or sister. For if you cannot recognize in another’s face the face of your brother or sister, the darkness has not yet begun to lift, and the light has not yet come.”* Are we still living in the darkness?