

2025_11_30 Homily
First Sunday of Advent

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/113025.cfm>

Why does Jesus invite us to stay awake? We can spend time in our lives distracted with the things of this passing world, especially during this season. Things like Christmas preparations; the lights, the gifts, plans for traveling, for meals and drinks, the Christmas cards, things that are good. But all these good things can distract us from our most important God given gift: God's Presence among us. God's presence is a major concern in the readings of this 1st Sunday of Advent. The prophet Jeremiah proclaims to the people of Israel that they will not be forsaken in their exile in the hands of pagan empires. God will raise up a new David who will take charge and lead God's people forward.

St. Paul invites us to put on the armor of light, because the day of Jesus' return is near. And Jesus tells us in the Gospel that none of us knows the day our Lord will come. Only the Father knows, and He will come as a thief in the middle of the night to set right what is wrong with the world. We may wonder if Jesus is talking about the end of the world, or about the end of each one of his disciples' lives. He is probably talking about both mysteries. A clear message is that God comes among us suddenly, unexpectedly, surprisingly. And we are to stay awake.

Another way to be distracted with the things of the world is this: We tend to believe that our lives go on forever. We love stability and avoid unexpected, unpredicted intrusions. Daily routine and habit protect us from the truth of our finitude. And when an unexpected situation intrudes on our routine, we have to admit our fragility. Life is shaken. It could be a diagnosis, an accident, a divorce, or an unexpected death. When we go through situations like these, we realize that our lives are not as stable and our world is not secure as we thought. We understand how fragile life is. Then, we would like God to be present in our lives here and now, to fix the problems, to heal the cancer, to give an answer to our questions. But God does not keep our schedule. God intrudes, showing up when least expected. St. Paul calls us to be patient and to persevere in being righteous. But we all tend to grow impatient in times of need. And God comes to us when we least expect God. God may surprise us when the sky is dark and we are at some bad place in our life. In God's plan, things happen at a perfect time.

Advent is a time of dark skies and short days. It is a season of preparation for the celebration of Christmas. The Lord calls us to wake up, to be alert, because our journey of life on earth ends, but during it, He will show up. He also proclaims to us this beautiful promise: As a thief, God doesn't wait until we unlock the door, open it, and

invite Him in. Our Lord will break in, because He is determined to win our love and will never allow us to leave Him behind. This God, according to Christ, likes nothing better than to allow us to go along in our accustomed ruts, following our well-worn paths, keeping our regular routine. And then... God shows up! We are to be alert. We don't want to be distracted and miss His Loving presence in our lives. So, we put on the armor of light, and find this God during our daily routines when we reach out to someone in need, when we feed the hungry and heal the hurting, when we pray for the suffering of the world, for our enemies, and for the dead.

God also present in our lives in the beauty of creation, in the Scriptures and in the Eucharist, in the neighbor who comes to our aid. If right now, any one of you is going through a dark moment in your life, be assured of this promise: Whatever suffering, concern, pain or difficulty you have now, stay alert and be patient: God will never abandon you. He will break in into your heart to console you, to strengthen you, to heal your anxiety and to be with you.

We are never alone. We never suffer alone. God is always at our side.

The Universal Prayer
Sunday 30th November 2025
First Sunday of Advent, Year A

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, as we begin this time of Advent, waiting for the return of Jesus at the end of time, and preparing for the festival of Christmas, we respond to Jesus' invitation to 'stay awake' in prayer.

1. That Pope Leo, as he concludes his Apostolic visit to Türkiye today and gives an Ecumenical Blessing with Patriarch Barthomomew, will encourage all Christians to live united in Christ.

We pray to the Lord.

2. That the Apostolic visit of Pope Leo to Lebanon, beginning tonight, and his visits with the President, parliamentarians, civil society leaders and diplomats, will advance the cause of peace and religious respect for all citizens and refugees in that land.

We pray to the Lord.

3. That all Christians will live decently as in the daylight, with no drunkenness, wrangling or jealousy, and prepare for Christmas clothed in the armor of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is faith, hope and love.

We pray to the Lord.

4. That nations will no longer lift sword against each other, nor against their own citizens, especially in Palestine and Israel, Ukraine and Russia, and within Sudan and Myanmar.

We pray to the Lord.

5. That the children, teachers and priests who have been kidnapped in Nigeria and Cameroon will be released or rescued, and feel the protection of their families and communities.

We pray to the Lord.

6. That all who have died through violence may go rejoicing into the House of the Lord and know the peace of the heavenly Jerusalem.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Eternal Father, give us the grace to 'stay awake' so that we will meet Jesus, your Son, in the worship we offer, in the Scriptures which we read, in the person of the poor and needy, and in those who show us kindness and forgiveness, for he lives and reigns forever and ever.