

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT-2008

Most people know the difference between right and wrong and even how Christ Jesus calls us to live. But, one of our many weaknesses as human beings is a distressing lack of staying power. It's really easy to stay on track for a while; driven by a burst of religious fervor or enthusiasm or sometimes even fear, but the fire eventually cools and flickers out. Just think of the many New Year's resolutions, diets, exercise regimens and promises to pray more often! They all go to that weird place called "good intentions."

The early Church faced the same problem: maintaining their fervor and moral compass as they waited for the return of the Lord Jesus. The Gospels are filled with parables of a sudden return of the Lord and the necessity of always being ready.

Time passes, however, and Jesus has not returned in final glory. Fervor and commitment cool and people slide into moral and spiritual laxity and indifference. There's plenty of time; maybe He already came and we missed Him.

Like a drumbeat, the warnings of the New Testament keep up the pace. Don't listen to scoffers and doubters. Don't give up or slack off. Time IS short, so live in anticipation.

But, time rolls on relentlessly. Two thousand years have come and gone without the return of Jesus, at least in the manner anticipated by so many. And, the spiritual embers are cool indeed.

As much as modern man likes to deny it, our time on earth IS short and fragile. Some live to ripe old age, others depart in the prime of life or even as children. This should NOT lead to morbidity but a passion for the gift of life, faith and grace!

Our Lord's exhortation to stay awake and alert is just as important now than it was in the first century. Not knowing the moment of the Lord's return is a POSITIVE and should not be the cause of fear.

If we know that our Lord can come at any moment, our proper response is a joyful desire to PLEASE HIM when He comes!

Advent this year therefore begins by trying to rouse the Catholic soul: the Master is returning. We need to invite others to learn to rest in this profound truth! We need to make Mass a priority not only on Sunday but throughout the week if possible, to take inventory of where we are loving and where we are resisting God's graces with regard to others or even ourselves.

He comes gently and as softly as each Host of the Mass entering our own world. The appointed time is now. To be awake in Christ is to be truly alive!