

First Sunday of Advent

A doctor opens a clinic and declares "I have the cure for everything, any cure available for 500rupees. If it doesn't work, I will give you back 1000 rupees". A man sees the sign and decides to make quick money. He goes inside the store and complains, "doctor, I seem to have lost my sensation of taste" The doctor then tells the nurse, "bring serum 22b from the 13th cabinet". The nurse does and puts a few drops in the patient's mouth. "Eww, this is petroleum" says the patient. Good, you can taste stuff now, that will be 500rupees" The patient, defeated, returns home. The next week he again goes to the same doctor, determined to get 1000rupees this time, he says "doctor, I seem to have lost my memory and I am having a hard time remembering things. The doctor tells the nurse, "bring serum 22b from the 13th cabinet" "But that's petroleum, how is that supposed to cure me?" Says the patient. "Oh wow! Seems like you have regained memory without any medication, that will be 500rupees" The patient again returns home. The following week he again goes to the same doctor, now fully prepared to get 1000rupees. He complains, "doctor, I seem to have lost my eyesight, please help me" The doctor shrugs and says, "I don't think we have a cure for that, so here you go." And hands the patient a 10rupee note. The patient looks at the note and says, "doctor, you promised to give 1000rupees, but you only gave 10rupees" The doctor replies joyfully, "what a miracle! Your vision is back!! That will be 500rupees".

Dear Friends,

As we start the season of Advent this weekend, it is also a new liturgical year. This is the season of preparation to celebrate the joy of Jesus' incarnation. Advent means "coming". The Advent wreath is made in a circle to remember eternity. We light the advent candle each week, pray, and reflect on the four virtues: Hope, faith, joy and peace. It helps all of us to prepare ourselves for Christ coming especially the second coming of Christ.

The readings today give us hope of Christ coming and asks us to be vigilant and watchful. The first reading today from the book of Isaiah gives us hope that God will restore us as he restored the people of Israel from the bondage of slavery. It is a fervent prayer of restoration. The prophet relies total trust in God as we are the clay in his hands and God is the potter.

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells his disciples to be vigilant and watchful. One thing is for sure. The master will come in return. We don't know the time of his arrival. The reward is also for sure.

Jesus is always telling us to wake up, to stay awake, to be vigilant, to be more alert to a deeper reality. What meant by this? How are we asleep to depth? How are we to wake up and stay awake? How are we asleep? All of us know how difficult it is for us to be in the present moment, not to be asleep to the real riches inside our own lives. The distractions and worries of daily life tend to consume us that we habitually take for granted what is most precious to us. Such as, our health, the miracle of our senses, the love and friendships that surround us, and the gift of life itself. We go through our daily lives not only with a lack of reflectiveness and lack of gratitude but with a habitual touch of resentment as well, a chronic, grey depression. We are asleep, to God and to our own lives.

How do we wake up? We may need an alarm to wake up as we wake up every day physically with our alarm clock or cellphones. There are some religious rituals work as a wake up alarm for us. None of us can live being alert all the time every day. But these seasons and our spiritual practices keep us active and awake. I will share two examples with you.

As most of us do, when I get up every day from my bed, I have a prayer of my own for two minutes. What happens if I don't pray on a given morning is not that I incur God's wrath, but rather that I tend to miss the morning, spending the hours until noon trapped inside a certain dullness of heart. The same can be said about praying before meals. We don't displease God by not first centering ourselves in gratitude before eating, but we miss out on the richness of what we're doing. Liturgical prayer and the Eucharist have the same intent, among their other intentions. They're meant to, regularly, call us out of a certain sleep.

So let us have our regular systems of awakening as we keep the alarm clock on all the time. We can see the fruits of it when we are vigilant and awake.