

First Sunday of Advent

A cat went to Heaven. God welcomed him there and asked him if there was anything He could do to make his time more pleasant.

The cat said, "I have been around the barn all my life and I have had to sleep on the hard ground all my life. Do you think I could ask for a soft pillow to sleep on?" God said, "Why not!" and gave the cat a pillow. The cat climbed and curled up on the pillow and went to sleep. He thought he was in Heaven.

A couple of days passed and a group of mice came up to Heaven. God asked them if He could make their stay more pleasant. One mouse said, "We are few in number because we are so slow. Could you give us something to make us faster?" God gave them a pair of roller skates. He was overjoyed and skated off going all over Heaven.

A few days later, God happened to come across the cat and asked him how he was doing. The cat responded, "I am doing great. This pillow you gave me is so wonderful! But I have to confess, you have outdone yourself by providing me with those meals on wheels!"

Dear Friends,

Happy Advent! We are starting a new liturgical year marked with the Gospel of Mark. Advent is a time to prepare ourselves for two reasons. One is to prepare for the imminent coming of Christ's birth (Christmas) that brings joy and happiness. Second is to prepare for an eternal joy of the second coming of Christ. Preparation is essential in our lives. How do we prepare? How does God want us to prepare ourselves?

Three days back, on November 30, the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), began in Dubai. Every year when this conference takes place, the world leaders talk about the climate crisis we have created for ourselves. With the present trend in carbon emission and fossil fuel usage, we are accelerating climate change that will extinguish life on planet earth. The changes in climate with frequent natural disasters are a clear warning for us to think about the end of the world. There are other natural disasters happening like Tsunami, earthquake, and eruption of Volcano, Wars and Covid 19.

On the other hand, Today social media brings more false news and rumors. We have heard so many stories about the end of the world. People, in general, have a paranoid fear about the end of the world. It was expected in AD 204, 999 and 2000 and 21 December 2012(Mayan Calendar). One thing is for sure. The planet earth or world is going to come to an end. But we don't need to panic, because we don't know anything about it. Things will happen in its time.

Today's readings ask us to do an AAA. Be alert, Awake, Aware. Mark's Gospel talks about eschatological nature of preparation. He urges us to be constantly on the watch and to stay awake so that we are ready for the Lord to come. Jesus gives an analogy of the Master traveling abroad. Today we have technology to update everything. But in Jesus' time, we never knew about it.

How does God want us to prepare ourselves?

Follow the AAA. It is hard to live in the present all the time. Because we are trained or tuned to go to the past or to the future. Creating awareness in us will help us to live in the present. Invariably all great scholars and religious leaders talk about it.

Secondly, the second reading talks about being grateful. Being grateful will help us to live in the present. Pope Francis asked us to be grateful and lead your life with mercy. Gratitude to God and to our fellow humans leads us to a responsible life.

Thirdly, St. Paul says, God is faithful. He emphasizes the basis of God's continuous care and our trust and requests us to have a fellowship in Christ. We are called to show our faithfulness in action.