

## Advent Sunday 1 “Stay awake”: *Catch up the value of silence and prayer*

We mark the passing of time by celebrating special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. Some days are more special for us than other days. Today is the beginning of a special season, Advent. During Advent we focus on waiting. Our life is made up of waiting: we wait for a person, some news, an event, a visit. Anytime we wait, we do so bcs we expect something to happen; we wait for a bus or train because we expect it to arrive. When we wait for a bus or train, we cannot see it coming but we hope it will come.

During advent, our waiting is twofold: Waiting for the second coming of Jesus and waiting for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. We know that the second Coming of Jesus will bring all God’s plans for the world to completion. As we wait in hope for the Second Coming of Jesus, we know he is with us in so many ways especially in the sacraments. So during Advent we are conscious of the fact that God is present with us while we wait for the fulfillment of God’s plans.

The words of Jesus in the Gospel today express the mood of this early part of the Advent season: “Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come.” To watch, to await the coming of the Lord means, *to be vigilant in order to discern promptly the signs of Emmanuel who is already among us, until the end of the world.*

In the second reading Paul give thanks to God and reminds his listeners of the many gifts they have received from God which will support them until the Second Coming of Jesus, “you will not be without the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”, as *he will keep you firm to the end* (1 Cor 1:7)

How does the Lord help us keep vigilance? As we get closer to him through prayer and other spiritual exercises during Advent, they help us to discern promptly the signs of ‘God among us’. Therefore, Advent is primarily the time to regain and catch up the *value of silence and prayer*. In prayer, through the grace of God, we will be enabled to watch over our thoughts, desires and actions, to purify our path in our faith journey. Feeling

disinterest in prayer and constantly distracted during prayer are usual obstacles that come across our growth in spiritual life. There are four ways with which the Satan can prepare trap for you. As he is cunning enough, and you are weak, you fall easy prey to him. You need to be aware of those traps.

1. *'Prayer is fruitless'*: Many of us have experienced the amazing power of prayer. But forgetting that, it is Satan's trap that makes human to conclude that prayer is fruitless. If we look at prayer only through the eyes of material benefits, or delayed or unanswered prayers, the Satan can work though to make us believe that prayer is fruitless.

2. *'You don't know how to pray'*: This trap is to make you feel that prayer is a complex and complicated process, and you are not well trained in prayer; leading to the conclusion to postpone prayer. You should realize, even the smallest prayer that comes from a loving heart is acceptable to God. For example, when a dad takes in his hand, his baby who produces some sounds only, will that dad think "I will listen to him only when he learns how to speak properly"? It's the same with God the Father. (Spirit helps us with the sighs that comes from our heart to God are pleasing to Him) (Rm 8:26).

3. *'It is enough to pray only when you have time'*: It's almost certain that not praying, saying, "I have no time", will never help you find time to pray. If God is my priority, prayer will have a place in my daily routine.

4. *'Work is prayer'*: there are many who skip prayer because of overworking, falling into the trap thinking 'it's enough to work and work itself is prayer'. Praying only at the moment of necessity shouldn't be our manner. We should know that God is not a "fire truck".

**Therefore, we should pray:** O Lord, in this time of waiting we want to catch up and regain the value of silence and prayer. With the help of your grace, we will decide to watch over our thoughts, desires, and actions during Advent to purify our path and be ready for Your coming. Make us capable of looking attentively at the present, so that we don't miss the opportunities for doing good that we can obtain with your grace during this Advent. We wait because we believe that waiting brings joy. Let us watch and wait with Mary, the woman who waits, in attentive listening and constant prayer. Amen.