

Sunday 1st (A) of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 24, 37-44): Jesus said to his disciples, «At the coming of the Son of Man it will be just as it was in the time of Noah. In those days before the Flood, people were eating and drinking, and marrying, until the day when Noah went into the ark. Yet they did not know what would happen until the flood came and swept them away. So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. Of two men in the field, one will be taken and the other left. Of two women grinding wheat together at the mill, one will be taken and the other left.

»Stay awake, then, for you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Just think about this: if the owner of the house knew that the thief would come by night around a certain hour, he would stay awake to prevent his house to be broken into. So be alert, for the Son of Man will come at the hour you least expect».

«Stay awake, then, for you do not know on what day your Lord will come»

Mons. José Ignacio ALEMANY Grau, Emeritus Bishop of Chachapoyas
(Chachapoyas, Peru)

Today, «just as it was in the time of Noah», people eats, drinks, marry and give in marriage, with the aggravating factor that man takes man, and woman takes woman (cf. Mt 24:37-38). But there are also, as in patriarch Noah's day, saints in the same office and in the same place than the others. And one of them will be taken and the other left, because the Just Judge will come.

We must be awake for «only those who are alert are not taken by surprise» (Benedict XVI). We must be prepared with our love enkindled in our heart, as the torch of the wise virgins. This is precisely what it is all about: there will come the time when we will hear: «Behold, the Bridegroom is here!» (Mt 25:6), Jesus Christ!

His arrival is always causing joy to those who carry the torch fastened in their heart. His coming is something like the parent who lives in a faraway country and writes his family: —when you less expect it, I will be there. From that day on, all is joy in that home: Our Dad is coming! Our model, the Saints, lived like this, “waiting for the Lord to come”.

The Advent is meant to learn to await with peace and love, the Lord who is coming. Nothing of the despair and eagerness typifying the nowadays man. Saint Augustine gives us a good recipe to await: «live your life as you would like your death to be». If we await with love, God will satiate our heart and our hopes.

Stay awake, for you do not know on what day our Lord will come (cf. Mt 24:42). Clean home, pure heart, thoughts and sentiments in Jesus’ style. Benedict XVI explains: «To watch means to follow the Lord, to choose what He has chosen, to love what He has loved, to conform one's own life to His». Then the Son of Man will come... and the Father will embrace us for resembling his Son.

«In those days before the Flood, people were eating and drinking (...). Stay awake, be alert»

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
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Today, in this Sunday, when we are just entering the time of Advent, we are also starting a new liturgical year. We can use this status as an invitation to refurbish some aspects of our life (spiritual, family, etc.).

In fact, we need to live our life, day by day, with a new rhythm and hopes. Thus, we can move the danger of routine and boredom further away. This feeling of permanent renewal is the best way to be alert. Yes, we must be on the alert! It is one of our Lord's messages that He transmits in the words of today's Gospel.

In the first place, we need to be alert because the reason of our mortal life is the preparation for eternal life. This time of preparation is a gift and a grace from God: He does not want to impose upon us neither his love nor heaven; He wants us free (which is the only way to love). A preparation that we do not know when will it end: «We announce Christ's advent, and not only one, but also another one, the second one (...), because this present world must eventually terminate» (St. Cyril of Jerusalem). We must, therefore, struggle to keep a hopeful attitude of renewal.

In the second place, we must be alert because routine and adjustment are not really congenial with love. In today's Gospel the Lord reminds us how in the time of Noah «people were eating and drinking» and «Yet they did not know what would happen until the flood came and swept them away» (Mt 24:38-39). They were “busy in other things” and —we have already said it— our time here must be a time of “betrothal” for our freedom to ripen: the gift that has been granted to us not to get rid of the others, but for our deliverance to the others.

«As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man» (Mt 24:37). The coming of God is the great event. Let us prepare to welcome him with devotion: «Lord Jesus, Come!».