First Sunday of Advent (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 24:37-44): Jesus said to his disciples, "For as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

"Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come"

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

Today, "as in the days of Noah," people eat and drink, marry (cf. Mt 24:37–38) — with the added aggravation that now man marries man and woman marries woman. Yet, just as in Noah's time, there are also (omit) saints working at the same office and sitting at the same desks as everyone else. One of them will be taken, and the other left, for the Just Judge will come.

We must keep watch because, as Benedict XVI said, "only those who are alert are not taken by surprise." We must be prepared, with love burning in our hearts like the lamp of the wise virgins. That is precisely the point: the moment will come when we will hear, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'' (Mt 25:6) Jesus Christ!

His arrival is always a source of joy for the one who keeps the torch lit in his heart. His coming is like that of a father who lives far away and writes home: "When you least expect it, I will show up." From that moment on, everything in the house is filled with joy: "Our Dad is coming!" The saints — our models — lived this way, "waiting for the Lord."

Advent teaches us to wait with peace and love for the Lord who comes. Nothing of the despair or impatience characteristic of today's world. Saint Augustine gives us a good rule for waiting: "Live your life

as you would like your death to be." If we wait with love, God will fill our hearts and our hope.

Stay awake, for you do not know on which day your Lord will come (cf. Mt 24:42). A clean house, a pure heart, thoughts and affections formed in the style of Jesus. 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 welcome us in His arms for resembling His Son.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Live your life as you would like your death to be." (Saint Augustine)
- "'Watch!'. It is a salutary reminder to us that life does not only have an earthly dimension but reaches towards a 'beyond', like a plantlet that sprouts from the ground and opens towards the sky." (Benedict XVI)
- "The Church, especially during Advent and Lent and above all at the Easter Vigil, re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history in the 'today' of her liturgy." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1.095)

Other comments

"In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking (...). Stay awake"

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, on 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 hope. 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.

First of all, we need to be alert because the reason for our mortal life is for the preparation of our 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 for which we do not know when it will 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.

Second, 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 "they did not know until the flood came and carried them all 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 others, but for our deliverance to others.

"For 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!"