

Gospel Verse
Sunday, November 30, 2008
(8:30 AM Mass)

“Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.”

■ **Mk. 13:35-36**

Wake Up! Now that I got your attention. He's real serious about this 'wake up' thing. This is the wake-up call. This is the wake-up season. This is the season of Advent. It is dark. The darkest days are coming. The solstice is coming. And he doesn't want us to be caught in the dark. He wants us to wake up. And, all spiritual masters agree on one thing, and Jesus is the ultimate spiritual master, and that is that to be fully alive, what it means to be fully human, means to be conscious, to be awake.

Christ is the most conscious of all people. And what was he conscious of? What was he aware of? He was aware of the presence. He was aware of the presence of his Father in all of creation. And there was only one thing that he wanted to do for you and for me and that was to wake us up as well so that we could be aware who God is. Who God is in our lives. And how God is really calling us to the fullness of life.

But we would rather be asleep. We are always asleep. Being asleep means doing what you always do because it's what you always do. You don't think about your reaction because it's just a response to the action. And that's the way most of us live our life. We've been kind of pre-programmed to get up and do this and respond in this way and to go through life. And we get very tired and very drowsy. And so we do things in our sleep. We marry in our sleep. We propagate in our sleep. We die in our sleep. And that's not alive. It's not living.

We sin in our sleep. As a matter of fact, sinning is cutting ourselves off from the Source. So, when we are sinning, we are cutting ourselves off from the Source of Life. And so he's saying 'wake up'. And it's really, really, really important. And this season of Advent is critically important. The reason it's so darn important is because if we're not awake when He comes, when He pours forth His grace, we're going to miss it. We're going to miss it.

And the reality is that the grace really is always here and always around us. But we are so preoccupied in our drowsiness, in our reaction, in our day-to-day activities that we miss it. We're like the two little fish in the middle of the sea. And they are swimming around in the sea. They say, 'I am told there's a magnificent place called the ocean. And all I see before me is this stupid water.' They are swimming in it. They are in the midst of it. They are in the midst of it. We are swimming in it. We are in the midst of it but because we are asleep we don't see it. So I'm saying, 'Wake up and pay attention'. And that's what Advent is all about.

I remember my first real Advent. It was in 1951. I was 7 years old and my brother and I were confined in the house on a dark, dreary December day. The snow had come and we did what brothers usually do when they are confined to their house. We fought. And it was the usual brother's fight. He said something. I said something. To this day I have no idea what we were fighting over. I do remember what the result was. The result wasn't pretty. Because both of us were petrified as to what was going to happen when our father came home. 'Dad's going to be really angry at this.' Dad's going to be really, really angry.'

My dad always got home around 3:00 in the afternoon. He had just got a brand new job with Fisher Body in Willow Springs. We had just moved to Wheaton. He had just finished his work to become a tool and die maker, which was such a step up for us. I was a big, big deal. He had never driven a car before. This was in 1951. He bought a 1939 Dodge. Big time! It was \$75. I'll never forget it. And we're waiting at 3:00 for dad to come home. Well, it's snowing and dad doesn't come home. At 3:30 we're still waiting for dad

to come home and it's snowing a little bit more and dad doesn't come home. At 4:00 there's about 5 inches on the ground and now we're getting a little bit concerned. Because by now dad should have been home about an hour ago. And my mother gets home from work and she invented 'concern'. So we're all staring out the window and we're waiting for dad. And, somehow, all those angers that my brother and I had against each other begin to melt away because we're waiting for dad. And he's not there. And we become more awake and more aware and we're staring out the window. And the more we stare out the window the more the snow falls and the more worried we become. Is he going to make it? Is he going to get here? We are more anxious for the coming of our father than we can ever be anxious for the coming of Santa Clause that year because why? Because he's our daddy. That's my daddy. I can remember in my little seven-year-old-heart – What would my life be without my daddy? I couldn't imagine.

Finally, at about 7:00 at night this creepy old car pulls into the driveway. And it was my car. We were so thrilled to see him alive and well and making it through the snow storm that my brother and I forgot to fight – at least for that day.

What happened? We were awake. We were alive. We were waiting. Most of the time we're not awake. We do everything in our sleep and we simply react. And when we just simply react, we usually cut ourselves off. I don't remember what started the fight between my brother and myself but I can tell you one thing – neither one of us sat down and said 'let's have a fight'. I don't think anybody ever sits down and intentionally says, 'I'm going to sin. I'm going to cut myself off from you. I'm going to hate you. I'm going to yell at you.' But something happens. I think we fall into our darkness. Walk into our routines. Fall into our knee-jerk reaction than anything else. So my brother and I fell into our pattern. It's the usual pattern of hurt, pain, resentment and revenge. Somebody says something and somebody else is offended.

Now, when you are hurt and wounded...and we are all wounded, we are the walking wounded. We have all been wounded by somebody's sleepiness, drowsiness. There's one of two things we can do. We either bury it and pretend it doesn't exist. Which you know as well as I do you never bury anything spiritually dead – especially negative spirit. So if you bury anger, resentment or hurt it isn't going away. It never goes away. It's going to pop out in the most ugly way. So burying it is a very bad strategy for hurt and pain. The thing we do is we lash out. We get revenge. We up the ante. 'You hurt me, watch what I do to you.'

Now, we don't do that consciously. We're on automatic pilot. We don't say, 'I'm now going to really hurt you'. We just do it. And when that hurt comes it gets worse and worse and worse.

I don't remember what the fight was about, but I remember what the result was – we busted a door down. He or I took a chair and put it right through...One of us took the chair and put it through the door. And that was the result of our anger until our father came back.

And that is exactly what we are doing today. We are lost in our hatred. We are lost in our sin. We are lost in our wounds. We are lost in our pain. And we're saying, 'Father come down'. That's why we're having Isaiah scream to us today. Rose read to us a plea from Isaiah. He's saying, 'Daddy, come on home. We're lost in our sin. We're lost in our stupidity. And you've got to be angry with us.' Oh would that you can come and catch us doing right. Would that you could come and catch us being mind-full. Being aware. Being awake of what we do and what we do to each other and how we hurt each other. Oh would that you can see that. But, you know what? Left to our own device we're just going to destroy each other. Isaiah says when you're there, something happens. Grace happens! Forgiveness happens!

The incredible thing for those who have the guts, and it takes guts to stand up and say, 'Yea, this is me and I'm sleeping and I need to wake up.' And admit it. When you are able to do that, the father is able to come down with the one thing that only God can give – GRACE. And what's Grace? God's presence among us to give us a power we do not have on our own. The moment my father came into the door, my brother and I were able to reconcile. Until his presence was there, all we could do was fight with each other.

St. Paul puts it this way: We're not orphans. He tells us today in the Gospel we're not orphans. You Corinthians have every gift you can possibly imagine. The gift of the Spirit has been given to you. The gift of reconciliation. The gift of healing. The gift of life. Take it. Of course, the Lord is saying to the community of Mary Queen - You got it too. You've got the gift of life, the gift of reconciliation, the power of God's spirit is among you. But, do not be like the stupid little fish swimming in the ocean and seeing only the water.

Wake up! Wake up! Cry out! Wait! Look for the window! Light a candle! Hope! Don't just stand there like that - hope! This is the season of hope of what is to come. We are wounded. We are hurt. If we are human, we are hurt. And we are human. But, we're not only human. We're also divine. We share the very divinity of the one who came 2,000 years ago and promises he will be with us until the very end. And he is coming to lick our wounds and make us whole. And not only our individual wounds. Not only in our wars between our brothers and sisters at home, but our corporate wounds as well. Why? Because for the future you have to have forgiveness. Forgiveness is always for the sake of the future. There is no future without forgiveness. Otherwise, we keep on sawing the saw in the same old place and repeating the same stupid mistakes year after year and we pass it on from one generation to the next generation. And the sins of the fathers and mothers are sent forth to their children and there is no forgiveness. There's only hatred.

Insofar as we are able to wake up and allow that grace to transform us and hand our wound and our pain over to Him, insofar as we are healed we have a future. We can do what we are called to do. And what we're called to do is to be useful to God. Useful. I want to be useful. I don't want to waste my life. I want to be part of that great parade and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ where every tear is wiped away. Where we are fully alive and we know the fullness of life. And if God can do that for us as individuals, God, of course, wants to do that for us as a community. We, Mary Queen of Heaven, have work to do. We cannot do it in the future until we are healed of our wound today.

So we cry - Come Lord. You are the potter; we are the clay. Mold us. Kiss our wounds. Make us into the people you want us to be. Fully alive. Awake. Awake!