



1st Sunday of Advent (Year A)

November 30, 2025

"Stay awake."

FIRST READING: Isaiah 2:1-5

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord! Isaiah paints a vision of the end of days, a vision that came to him in prayer.

In the end, all come to God and peace reigns. The universal call to holiness is realized throughout the world.

SECOND READING: Romans 13:11-14

You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. When the call to holiness is sounded in our lives, we must respond now. There isn't time for a committee meeting or long-range planning. The phone rings and we must answer! We must be rooted in love.

GOSPEL: Matthew 24:37-44

"Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come." With the same sense of urgency, this Gospel reading leads us to action. We must see with eyes of faith – praying quietly and acting with purpose. This will lead us to holiness.

Homily Talking Points

1. My friends, the Church's new year begins not with jingle bells or sentimental carols, but with an unexpected voice—Jesus calling out, *"Stay awake!"*

Advent begins, not in comfort, but in awareness. Not in nostalgia, but in readiness. It is the season when we listen again for the quiet footsteps of the Holy One moving among us, sometimes unnoticed, always near.

A season that begins with urgency and hope

We might expect Advent to start with a sweet story about Mary and Joseph, or angels and shepherds. But instead, Jesus speaks of floodwaters, of people caught unprepared. It sounds alarming—until we realize his purpose is not to frighten us, but to awaken us.

This Gospel is not about predicting the end of time. It's about *living in the present moment* with eyes open and hearts alive. "As it was in the days of Noah," Jesus says. People were eating, drinking, marrying—living ordinary lives. But they missed the moment of grace. They were so absorbed in daily life that they forgot the larger story of love unfolding in their midst.

Advent calls us to live differently—to be *awake* to the quiet ways Holy Mystery moves through the ordinary, to recognize the sacred in what we so easily overlook.

2. God's coming: not distant, but already within

Advent reminds us that the coming of God is not only something ahead of us. It is something already among us, even within us. We must be ready, dear friends, to open our hearts to this Presence.

The same Word that took flesh in Mary still seeks to take flesh in us—in our compassion, our patience, our willingness to forgive. The Incarnation is not an event we recall from long ago; it is a pattern we are invited to live daily.

Karl Rahner once wrote that “the meaning of Advent is that God is present even when He seems absent.”¹ That is, we live always within the horizon of Holy Mystery—the God who is both beyond our grasp and closer to us than our own breath. Advent teaches us to trust that Presence: to see divine love incarnate and indwelling, here and now.

3. Staying awake: the practice of attention

To “stay awake,” in the Gospel sense, is not about sleepless anxiety. It is about a certain kind of inner attentiveness, a way of seeing with the heart.

We stay awake when we notice the face of Christ in someone who is lonely or afraid. We stay awake when we pause amid our busyness to whisper a prayer of gratitude. We stay awake when we refuse cynicism and choose kindness instead.

Advent is a gentle training of the heart—to notice, to expect, to welcome. Every moment can become an encounter with the Holy if we are awake to it.

4. The light already rising

St. Paul tells us in today's second reading: *“It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep... the night is far spent, the day is at hand.”*

This is the Christian vision of time—not fear of what's coming but hope for what is already dawning. Even in the world's long nights of violence or division, a light is rising. It may seem small at first, like a candle in the dark, but it is real. It is the light of love stronger than death, the same light that will shine from a manger in Bethlehem.

We believe that Jesus is already present and yet continuing to be present in our world. God has done the unthinkable, the unimaginable, and made this world, the earth and the entire universe, a divine home. Hence, we Jesus arrives, not only in glory at the end of time, but here, into this moment, into our hearts, into our world now, today, in this very moment.

We must, as today's readings teach us, stay awake and be vigilant in order to see and recognize the Presence of Christ in the faces of the poor, the cry of the immigrant, the suffering of those who live on the margins of society. And yes, Christ is present among the rich, the comfortable, and the privileged—but there his face is often harder to see, obscured by the illusions of control, abundance, and the subtle distance from compassion that comfort can create.

5. Simple Advent practices:

Perhaps this Advent we can choose one small way to stay awake.

- Light a candle before dawn or in the evening and let its glow remind you that God's Presence already fills the room. Sit in silence with this flickering light to hear how you are being invited into the work of healing and justice.
 - Begin the day with silence, even for a few minutes, before looking at your phone or the news. Really, just pause quietly before turning to your screen. Allow the silence to fill your heart as you open it to the presence of Holy Mystery, already dwelling within you.
 - Or reach out to someone who is waiting for a word of love. How long has it been since you told a friend, spouse, child, or neighbor that you love them?
 - Ready out to the poor this week, offering your money, your time, your very self to them, for in doing that, you reach out to Jesus and in these small awakenings, Christ comes again.
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6. Closing

Advent is the season of divine nearness. The Holy Mystery we await is not far away. The Word is made flesh in our midst—in love, incarnate, and indwelling.

We open our hearts to Holy & Gracious Mystery, in order to awaken ourselves to the God of love. We allow ourselves to live with the wonder of God's Presence in our ordinary days. And we stay alert to Jesus' coming, ready to receive him in the faces of one another, and alive with hope for the world he so loves."

(Pause for a moment and then conclude your homily with this poem.)

Awake

The night is deep,
but not without promise.
A single light trembles
on the far horizon.

The world turns,
unaware,
as heaven leans close

to whisper,
“*Stay awake.*”

Not in fear,
but in wonder.
Not watching the clock,
but attending to our hearts.

For Love is near—
not marching in thunder,
but arriving quietly,
as dawn through an open window,
as peace in a restless soul.

Awake, O heart,
to the Holy already here,
to the Mystery
that wears our own flesh,
and calls our name in love.

¹ Karl Rahner, *The Great Church Year: The Best of Karl Rahner's Homilies, Sermons, and Meditations*, trans. Albert Raffelt and Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 6–7.