

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent B

A Homily by Fr. Alphonse Gollapalli

(May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.)

A mother was becoming nervous as her grownup son was still sleeping. It was getting late for the Sunday Mass. She shouted up the stairs, "Get up, son! It is time to go for Mass." The son responded, "No, mother, I am sleeping." The mother shouted again, "your breakfast is ready, get up and come down and it is almost time to go for Mass." The son shouted back, "No mother, I am sleepy, I don't need breakfast." The mother hurried upstairs and shouted knocking loudly on the door, "Son, if you don't get up now, it will be a disaster." The son said, "Why should I get up?" She said, "Well, first of all your breakfast is ready, secondly it is the first Sunday of Advent and thirdly, you are the pastor and you have three Masses to celebrate."

Everybody likes sleeping. But oversleeping is not good for health. Experts typically recommend that adults should sleep between seven and nine hours each night. Sleeping too much means, that you are being less active. This gives the body less time to burn off its energy which otherwise gets stored as fat. Eventually this will lead to obesity, diabetes and depression. One of the most common and most unpleasant side effects that most people who oversleep experience is headaches. This is caused by the effect that oversleeping has on the neurotransmitters of the brain. Unless you sleep on a special, expensive mattress you will eventually get back-pain from oversleeping. There is a disturbing connection between oversleeping and heart disease. Studies conducted on people have shown that those that oversleep have a 38% increased chance of suffering from coronary heart disease. There is concern that people who sleep over 9 hours every night have a higher death rate than those that sleep for 7-8 hours. Finally, oversleeping can also cause people some serious psychological side effects as well. When you wake up and see that it is 11 or 12 o'clock, you realize that you wasted your time doing something that was bad for your health. This can really make you feel bad and can cause you to start the day in a foul mood.

Jesus says, "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. Be watchful! Be alert!**" Waiting and watching may be difficult in the technologically developed world. Our lives have been put on a routine mode and on a 'fast track.' Wake up, get ready, go to work, return home, prepare food, watch TV or play with social media and you are tired and go to sleep. It is almost impossible to sit in quiet silence for a few minutes and meditate. It may be the reason why several hesitate to sign up for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Perhaps they don't know what to do with one full hour alone with the Lord. It may be the reason why we pray less but be on an overly active mode on other things.

You watch and wait while you cook your food. You watch and wait for your wound to heal. The pregnant mother watches and waits for the birth of her child. Similarly we have to learn to wait for the Lord. The whole waited for the Lord since the beginning of creation. The people of Israel waited for the promised Savior for ages and ages. And now the people of redemption wait for the Lord's eschatological parousia for hundreds and thousands of years.

Waiting and watching doesn't mean you should spend time in idleness. Some people in St. Paul's time thought that the Lord's coming was to happen in their lifetime and didn't do anything. He admonished such people and said, "***In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat. We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food***" (2Thess 3:10-12).

The season of Advent will teach us how to be actively watching and waiting. One of the finest ways is to become in full communion with the church. Be in the state of grace through the reception of Sacraments such as Reconciliation, Confirmation and Holy Matrimony. When you are in communion with God and Church, you will long for the Lord's coming. You will cry out to the Lord, just like the prophet Isaiah, and say, "***Return for the sake of your servants, Lord! Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.***" We prayed in the collect, "Almighty God, grant to us the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming." Are we running towards Jesus Christ while we wait for him? Or are we busy with our own things and don't mind at all about when the Lord is coming? "Psalm 130 describes that we have to wait and watch for the Lord like a watchman waits for the dawn. "***My soul is waiting for the Lord I count on His word. My soul is longing for the Lord, more than watchman for daybreak. Let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord.***"

Sleeper awake, arise from the dead. The great day has dawned. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.