

First Sunday of Advent – Extraordinary Form  
Ave Maria Catholic Church, Sunday November 28, 2021

Romans 13: 11 –14

And do this because you know the time; it is the hour now for you to **awake from sleep**. For **our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand**. Let us then **throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light**; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lk 21: 25 –33

There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the **Son of Man coming in a cloud** with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand. Consider the fig tree and all the other trees. When their buds burst open, you see for yourselves and know that summer is now near; in the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

## **It is Time to Awake from Sleep**

First Sunday of Advent - Romans 13: 11 –14 / Lk 21: 25 –33  
Ave Maria Catholic Church, November 28, 2021 - Fr. David M Vidal

The apostle Paul tells us in the first reading: *“You know the time. It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed,”* (Rom 13:11).

What does the apostle mean when he says: **“You know the time”**?

Time is very precious to us, and certainly it is worth more than money. Saint Escriva de Balaguer used to say: “Time is glory.” It is glory when we “spend” time, investing it in our salvation and in the salvation of our brothers and sisters. However, if we waste our time, how will we get it back? Advent helps us to put time into perspective. At the beginning of this new liturgical year, we take pause to fix our eyes towards our goal, towards Jesus.

During Advent we look forward to an event that happens in history and transcends history. Every year, we await the coming of Jesus, who will be born for us in Bethlehem. Thanks to the liturgy, first the expectation, then the coming of the Lord is renewed, year after year. We anticipate, and then we celebrate that Jesus is coming for you, that He comes for me, to save you, and to save me.

Time is precious, and we should not waste it. **How do we waste time?** The most dreadful way in which we waste our time is when we fall into sin. Sinning can be compared with sleeping.

Sometimes, during our sleep we believe that we are awake, and we move, talk, and interact with others. However, that is only in our imagination, that is not true life. When in our dreams we find difficulties and face terrible dangers, we are terrified and suddenly we wake up. It was only a nightmare, and we are thankful that it was only a bad dream.

When a person lives in sin, he or she is sleeping too. Because the person lives in a world of fantasy. Sin is false reality. Sin is deceptive. The sinner closes his or her eyes to all the things that are real and true and starts dreaming. Unfortunately, that is not a beautiful dream but a nightmare.

This is why the apostle Paul tells us today in the first reading: **“It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep.”** Wake up and see the real beauty of a life of grace, see the true life of happiness that is reserved for those who love God. We all need to wake up and say: “That was only a bad dream, and thank God, I am now awake.”

Time is precious, the time of our lives must be a continual expectation of this moment, of this encounter with Jesus.

The shepherds hastened to the stable in Bethlehem; later the Magi arrived from the East. Each one in a certain sense symbolizes the entire human family. We too must go joyfully to meet the Lord!

### **This is the time for us: Advent**

Advent is a time of preparation. It is a joyful season because we are going to see our Savior. (cf. Ps 122:1) We live in this great “pilgrimage” of our earthly life. And we know that we are not only called to find the Lord but also to dwell in his house. There is our true “home.” Advent impels us to hasten to this journey with hope. Jesus comes to us to tell us that we have a better life and a better home, the best home we can ever think of or dream. Then, with exceeding joy we must look for it.

Advent is also the expectation of the “day of the Lord,” that is, the “hour of truth.” It is the expectation of that day when “[Jesus] shall judge between the nations and impose terms on many peoples.” (Is 2:4). Then, we need to prepare ourselves for that moment with holy fear:

Holy fear is a sublime disposition and is a gift coming from God. There are three classes of fear: worldly fear, fear of slaves, and filial fear.

**Worldly fear** is that which would not hesitate to offend God in order to avoid some temporal evil. This fear is always evil, because it places its end and goal in this world and completely turns its back on God. It suffers more from the loss of a sinful action than from the loss of God. This is the worldly fear of Herod who was afraid of losing his worldly power but was not afraid of killing innocent people.

**Fear of slaves** is that which serves God and fulfills his Divine Will because of the evils which would come if things were not properly done. This fear could either be of temporal punishment or of the eternal punishment of hell. This fear, even though it is imperfect is substantially good because it enables us to avoid sin and direct our lives towards God. It moves us to the sorrow of attrition (because of the fear of punishment). However, is this the highest disposition we can have?

There is something better and it can be presented in this way: “I would not commit a sin even if there were no hell. Why? Because sin is an offense directed to God.”

**This is filial fear** or the fear of sons: with this holy fear, we serve God and run away from sin only because it is an offense against God, because we love Him, and we do not want to do anything against his honor. We love Him as a son loves his Father, not wanting to sadden Him in any way or to be separated from Him. Without any doubt, this fear is good and perfect.

Advent is a precious time in which we prepare ourselves with joy and holy fear for our encounter with the Lord. Like the shepherds or the Magi, we also want to see the Lord, and we start walking or continue walking towards Him.

Finally, **Advent is like a path, because it requires a movement, that is the transformation of our interior.**

The apostle Paul tells us in the first reading: “Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

During Advent we seek an encounter with a person, and this person is Jesus. How do we find Jesus? First, we need to throw off everything that does not belong to Him and is opposed to Him. Then, we need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. How can we welcome Jesus if we do not first throw off what displeases Him?

The encounter with Jesus is not brought about solely “from without.” It is not only the lights, the tree, and the nativity scene, but it is also “from within.” Advent calls for a transformation of our interior that corresponds to the sanctity of the Lord. Then, we need to reject whatever is contrary to God’s holiness in order to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The “historical” meaning of Advent is penetrated by this “spiritual” meaning. Advent is not merely a remembrance of the historical period that preceded the birth of the Savior, but beyond that, and more profoundly, Advent reminds us that we must be ready for the great “Advent”, by preparing our interior, by preparing ourselves spiritually.

“Therefore, stay awake!” Gospel watchfulness is the precondition for a good use of our time, a good use of our life. “The night is advanced; the day is at hand.” (Rom 13:12). Let us prepare ourselves for Christmas, staying awake that we may receive God’s grace, and welcome Jesus into our hearts. Amen