

“A Firm Hope”

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Mark 13.24-37
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“Be on guard! Be Alert!” is the call of today's Gospel Sunday to begin the season of Advent and begin a new liturgical year, so that we can be prepared for the coming of our Lord. This time represents for the Christian world the opportunity to reflect on the internal disposition of what it means to be a true believer.

As a symbol of this new beginning, we have the Advent wreath accompanied by four lights: hope, joy, peace and love; Each one represents the spiritual path that the Church follows during this time of preparation for the Nativity of the Lord.

Today, the first Sunday of Advent, the light of hope is lit, a virtue that gives us the security of waiting for what God has promised us. After passing the time of suffering comes the promise of reaching the Kingdom of heaven. “He who waits, he can achieve what he wants.” This is how the Christian learns to live with patience and faith, trusting in the words of the apostle Paul: “God works all things for the good of those who love him.”

Everything happens in the perfect time that God has arranged for his children. This is why we hear from the Gospel of Mark: “Concerning the day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son. Only the Father knows.” This is the invitation to all believers to live awake and vigilant, as we wait for the second coming of our Lord.

The exciting events that the Scriptures reveal, in this portion of the Gospel of Saint Mark, become an exhortation to keep our hearts awake and joyful because God's time is getting closer.

The Son of man is already at the door. Jesus said: “In those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will cease to give its light, the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly forces will tremble.” These signs of nature are the assurance that God has

authority over the entire universe, not to cause fear, rather, they become the joy of being prepared and vigilant.

The announcement of the Advent reminds us that the Christ will return with great power and glory. He came the first time full of humility, now he returns with majesty and glory. And the promise we hear today, from the gospel of Mark, will come true: "He will command the angels, and will gather his chosen ones from the four cardinal points, from the farthest corner of the earth to the farthest corner of heaven." Because God always keeps his promises, that is why he has called us to live in union with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is very clear in telling us that the Son of God returns, that there will be signs and many will be confused: "Learn this teaching from the fig tree: When its branches become tender, and its leaves sprout, you realize that the summer is near. In the same way, when you see the signs of nature, know that the Son of man is already at the door."

The Christian life must be a constant preparation. Heeding the call to stay awake and vigilant is reflected in a life of prayer that connects us with divinity. It becomes evident, around us, the existence of many bitter lives, homes in crisis, families destroyed. To stay awake is to be aware so as not to change eternal things for temporary ones. The world is living in difficult times and we, Christians, must be alert, taking care not to fall into distractions. As in the Gospel, we must stay awake and vigilant, lest the Lord, who left us taking care of the house, arrive at any moment and find us sleeping.

Advent is the time to feel God close, confident, intimate. The good Christian lives sensibly, warning of the danger and traps of the enemy. The gospel affirms that our Lord will, indeed, return. Some try to calculate when this event will occur, but the most important thing is to be awake and vigilant, because only the Father knows the day and hour.

Meanwhile, the Church invites us to a clean and honest life, asking for God's grace to strip us of the works of darkness and clothe us with the weapons of light in this mortal

life. The Word of God announces the return of the Son, it assures us that all this will happen before some of those who are now alive die. Heaven and earth will cease to exist, but this word will have its fulfillment.

We are in the hands of the Lord. The prophet Isaiah confirms to us the protection of God who always acts in favor of his people. He defines the people of God as the clay in the hands of a good potter who is to carry out a perfect work. The Lord is good and just, he corrects and guides the humble along his path and instructs them to live in justice. The message on this first Sunday of Advent is to keep hope alive in the divine promises, to give meaning to our spiritual freedom, to rejoice in the time of certain expectation of the return of Christ.

Be on guard! Be alert!