

First Sunday of Advent: Be Ready

I really don't like to turn my homilies into episodes from my life, but in light of today's Gospel, *Stay Awake, Be Ready*, I have to tell you an adventure in Cariat Care I had three years ago almost to the day. I needed to have another heart ablation and decided to go to the same doctors that took care of me somewhat successfully seven years earlier at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. The docs decided after the ablation to put me on heart rhythm medication. I was monitored 24/7 with wires all over the place. So, I was sitting in my room, bored to death, watching Netflix on my iPad, when suddenly four nurses rushed into my room along with a doctor and his P.A. They asked me if I was OK. I said I was fine. They responded that my heart stopped for six and half seconds. I asked them if they had the right room. That did not go over big. The next thing I know, I'm wearing these huge defib pads all day, pads that were connected to a plug that was put into the pocket of my hospital gown. I mean, a plug. Are you kidding me? That was not all that reassuring. After about 10 hours, I talked them into getting rid of those pads. I did not want to deal with anyone with a quick trigger finger. Besides this was the time of year when people were putting up their Christmas trees. I did not want to take a chance that someone would decide to light this one up. At least I thought the whole situation was funny. They did get rid of the pads. They were just a pre-caution. But that certainly got me thinking, that, according to them, I had better be ready for the end of time, or at least my own time. Well, Fr. Kyle Bell had anointed me before I left for Mayo, and I had put my personal affairs into order; but I had not really taken any of this all that seriously. Until the false code blue. Actually, there were three false code blues, but who's counting? Anyway, they got the medication that was doing this out of my system. So all is OK now. It was exciting though. I felt bad for the nurses who lost some years from their lives.

What I got from all this is that the end can come, even while we're watching Netflix, or driving to work, or going to school, or just being busy with our normal routine.

The Gospel speaks about the suddenness of the end of time, be that the end of all time or the end of our own particular time. We have to be ready because the Lord will Come a Second Time when we least expect. As long as we are doing our best to live as his sons and daughters, we really don't have anything to fear. In fact, we can look forward to the times prophesied by the first reading from *Isaiah*, a time when there will be at peace, a time when swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, and aircraft carriers into skate board parks and tanks into chicken coops. The only thing we have to do, according to the conclusion of the first reading, is walk in the light of the Lord.

What does that mean, though, "to walk in the light of the Lord." St. Paul clarifies this in today's second reading from *Romans*. He says that we need to throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. We need to conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy. We need to put on Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

We need to walk in the Light of the Lord. Isn't it amazing how things that do not belong to the Lord tend to be covered in darkness? Be they places that no Christian should go or actions that no Christian should do, it seems that there is a commonality to all immorality that much of it takes place in dark places. When we put on the armor of light, we are putting on the Light of Christ. His Light protects us from engaging in deeds of darkness. When we have a relationship with the Lord, we can see the darkness for what it is, an exercise in selfishness where Christ is not invited and where we should not be. So we have to ask ourselves, do I **want** to pray over a particular decision or course of action be it in business, family, work? Or would I rather not pray over it? Would I rather just do something without considering my dignity as a son or daughter of God? Do I prefer the selfishness of the darkness over the self less ness of the Light of Christ? Do I recognize my responsibility to others to live in the light? In Matthew 5:16 the Lord says, "*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*"

The reading from *Romans* also says, *Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.*

No provisions for the desires of the flesh. Hmmm. We are told not to have a fall back plan in case we want to take a break from Christianity. People with addictions know that a secret stash will only remain secret for a little while. That hidden bottle will be in the hands of the alcoholic when a bad day hits, just as any stash of drugs, porn, or anything that belongs to the darkness will soon take over the lives of the addicted. But it is not just the addicted that need to be concerned about that which is hidden in darkness. That secret stash will take over the lives of all those who are not thoroughly committed to Christ. In the same way, making provisions for the desires of the flesh also refers to having a person we look to for intimacy when it is missing from our lives, as when a marriage is going through a challenging time or if we are looking for an escape from our lives. We can not be making provisions for the desires of the flesh.

The First Sunday of Advent tells us to stay awake. Stay awake for the end of time. Stay awake for the end of our own times. Be aware of that which belongs to the darkness and that which belongs to the Light. Walk in the light of the Lord, and do not be afraid, even if nurses fly into your room convinced that your are in a code blue.