

HOMILY 1ST SUN ADVENT November 29, 2020

Mary was all ready for her blind date. She was wearing her best outfit, her hair was fixed, her makeup was perfect. She was really disappointed when her date did not show up. After an hour of waiting, she changed into her pajamas, washed off her makeup, gathered a bunch of junk food, and parked herself in front of the television. As soon as she got involved in her favorite show, there was a knock at the door. She opened the door to find her handsome date standing on the doorstep. He stared at her at shock and then said in disbelief: “I’m two hours late and you’re still not ready?”

In the Gospel reading we are warned to be watchful! Be alert! We do not know when the Lord of the house is coming. Now Mary did not remain watchful and alert and we can understand why. She was going on a blind date so she did not even know him. She did not even know if he would be worth waiting for. So giving him 1 hour seems more than reasonable to me. And any blind date that shows up 2 hours late without a good reason is probably not worth being watchful and alert for. But we are being warned to be watchful and alert for the coming of Jesus into our lives. Jesus already came into our lives 2,000 years ago in the incarnation. He promises to come again at the end of time. He also comes into our lives every day. We know Jesus and we know he is worth waiting for. Jesus is our hope.

Today is the first day of our new Church year. Our Church year is out of sync with our calendar year, our fiscal year, our school year. That is because our Church year is not tied to the four seasons, finances or grade levels. Our Church calendar is tied to the development of our spiritual lives. Only Christians are celebrating Advent, and Advent is a time of new beginnings. What do we need to do to prepare for Jesus to come into our lives each day? I am going to suggest that that is why we need to be watchful and alert, not for Jesus to come into our lives at some time in the future, but for Jesus to come into our lives today. Jesus is working in our lives in ways that we do not expect. If we are not watchful and alert, we will miss him.

We are living through some very difficult times right now. This pandemic has been going on for a long time now. Are you beginning to lose hope? We are getting all kinds of warnings to stay home, to be careful, and some people are not heeding those warnings. I know that Jesus Christ is in charge. I know that we are going to work through this together, and I want all of you to be healthy when that happens. If you find yourself losing hope, there are ways that you can strengthen your faith in Jesus.

One way to strengthen our faith in Jesus is to get to know him better through prayer. I am going to suggest a form of prayer called *lectio divina*. I am going to

suggest that you pray with the Gospel of Mark, as that is the Gospel we will be focusing upon in Mass this year. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Pick a short passage. Read the section two or three times very slowly until you become familiar with it. Then set your Bible aside. Retell the passage to yourself in your own words. Use your imagination and embellish the passage. Add lots of details. Speculate on how the people in the passage may be feeling. Put yourself in the passage. Then just sit quietly for a few minutes. Then answer the following questions. What did I learn about Jesus? How was Jesus speaking to me? You may even want to write your answers down in a notebook.

The other thing that you can do to get to know Jesus better is look at the difficulties you have worked through in the past. I never achieved any great accomplishments or worked through any difficulties alone. Jesus always had a hand in it in the past and I trust that he will continue to do that in the future. Jesus brought the people into my life that I needed. Jesus is our hope. Stay watchful! Stay alert! Jesus is definitely worth waiting for.