



Light Bearers
Advent / Christmas Program 2011

First Sunday of Advent

Stay Awake

Gospel: *Mark 13:33-37*

Jesus said to the disciples “Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Response

- Recall a time when you have, perhaps very willingly, stayed awake to be a doorkeeper or welcomer. How did you occupy the hours?
- How might your experience connect with this Gospel summons to “stay awake?”

Reflection

As I reflect on Jesus’ call to “stay awake”, it brings to mind the many times I have as a parent been called to stay awake, to be alert and attentive to the needs of my family: keeping awake and waiting for teenage children to return home at night; waiting for exam results; for medical test results to be returned; waiting for

the births of each of our grandchildren. These can be times or moments of great anxiety and not always ending with the expected joy and happiness as one would hope. This waiting is not the usual bored or restless kind of waiting.

One such time of waiting for a new grandchild had a tragic and totally unexpected result with our little baby living for just five hours. Nothing can prepare you for that moment of anticipated joy, turning quickly to utter despair, sadness and grief.

My previous seven years of formation as a Lay Carmelite helped me to cope with the pain and to reach out to my family to offer support and comfort. Through prayer and contemplation I called on God in anger, in disappointment, in utter helplessness for myself and family. I would stay awake praying for the strength to survive all that was going on, the chaos we were thrown into. I knew what I was longing for, to be in the Presence of God; to be comforted, to be given some meaning or understanding for our loss. This God-moment was a time to stay awake to surrender to the Divine Presence and allow that slow process of transformation to turn our tears into hope and inner peace.

Gabrielle Fogarty

Response

- How does Gabrielle’s story speak to you?

The Church in the Modern World: Hope #4

In every age, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.

We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.

Response

- Name some of the signs of our times: some of the hopes, desires, dramatic features of our world.
- What might it mean for us to “stay awake” or attend to the “signs of the times” in our daily living?

Suggested Advent Action this Week

- Be alert or awake to the signs of the times that are before us in the media: people’s great hopes and longings; dramatic features of our world; images that touch the heart.
- During this week reflect upon the meaning of “hope” as explained in the notes on Page 6.

Three Minutes of Prayer

Take a few minutes to sit quietly, and be still. Imagine that you are standing with Christ, as a doorkeeper. You are staying awake and alert to welcome people who are longing for change, peace, love, refuge or freedom in our world. Close your eyes and breathe in the word: **Welcome.**

All:

**Christ our companion,
you are ever-coming
into our days and our world,
calling us to recognise you
in often-surprising ways.
May your Spirit awaken us
to signs of your presence,
and encourage us to act
where we see a need,
for we are doorkeepers who await
your reign with Advent hope.
Amen**



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