

# First Sunday of Advent

Year A

Isa 2:1-5

Ps 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Rom 13:11-14

Mt 24:37-44

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Most of us can remember being told to *Awake up* when we were growing up. Maybe the words came from one of our parents after we tried to catch a few extra minutes of sleep on a school day. Maybe it was in the classroom when we discovered that not only did we not know the answer to a teacher's question **B** we didn't even hear the question! For many of us, waking up is indeed hard to do and remaining attentive to someone or some task during the day can sometimes present an equal challenge.

As we begin the season of Advent, the Church invites us to *Awake up* to something wonderful, to some good news! In the first reading from Isaiah, we hear of God's dream and plan for humanity. It is a vision and promise of hope: **Y**they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. The message is both clear and challenging. It presents an invitation for enemies to become friends and for weapons of destruction to become tools suitable for gardening and farming. It is in this *Alight* and vision that our God calls us to walk.

In the second reading, St. Paul tells the community of believers in Rome to *Awake up*, **A**for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first became believers. This sounds like another invitation to get moving, namely, **A**to lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. I can't help but mention the influence these words about *A*putting on Christ had on the life of St. Augustine. In his *Confessions*, we read how it was these words from St. Paul that became a *Awake up* call for the conversion of Augustine's heart.

The words of Isaiah and Paul remind us that the best way for us to prepare to remember the celebration of God's coming among us in Jesus is through a conversion of our hearts.

The readings today call us to ask ourselves: what keeps you and me from furthering God's dream presented to us through Isaiah? How does darkness,

spoken of by St. Paul, manifest itself in you and me? What name or face do we give it? Does it appear in some anger, jealousy, or selfishness? What is the darkness in us that needs to be put aside and replaced with the Armour of light?

In the next four weeks, the Church invites us to enter into the longing of those who first waited for the coming of the Messiah. Scripture helps us to do this through the figures of Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary. Advent also directs our minds and hearts to await Christ's second coming at the end of time, spoken of in today's Gospel: "Keep awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." Advent is a time to wake up to God's love, and to realize more fully that God wants us to love one another as God loves us, unconditionally. It is a time, especially, to renew our hearts in and through love. May Isaiah's prayer guide our journey through Advent: "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord."