

Readings: Isaiah 63:16b -17, 19; 64:2-7; 1 Cor.1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37

**Theme: “Watch!”**

In our first reading we see a situation in the days of Isaiah when an opponent of Israel loomed large. Israel had been humiliated and suffered too many defeats. So, they were watching, praying and pleading with God to rip open the heavens and come charging on the scene like a mighty champion and give them victory over their enemies.

They acknowledged their sinfulness. They admitted that they had strayed. But then they twisted things and blamed God. Look, you are our father. You made us the way we are. We are nothing but clay, so it is your fault, so come and rescue us!

It is like the little boy who was skipping down the sidewalk in front of his mother, when he stumbled and skinned his knee. He came running back to his mother crying and said, “why don’t you watch where I’m going!”

**Did you see now** why we call the scripture the Living word of God? Isaiah describes our day as well as his own. The world is a mess. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn has said: “The great tragedy of our day is that people have forgotten God.” The more we struggle on our own, the worse things become. We need a Rescuer, a Savior, who is bigger than life.

**The Good News** is that God came 2000 years ago and has never left! He did not rip open the heavens and come down in grandeur and power, but rather silently in the darkness of the night as a little child born in poverty.

Just as we annually anticipate and celebrate the birthdays of our loved ones, so we do the same every year for the birthday of Jesus at Christmas.

That was His first coming. His second coming will be at the end of the world. Because of global warming, hurricanes, earthquakes, wars and terrorism, some people think it is right around the corner. I will not go that route. They are not worthy of our time because Jesus says, “we do not know the day or the hour.” Only the Father knows and He is not telling!

The Gospel today assures us the best preparation for His second coming is to be caught doing our duty day in and day out. As Isaiah puts it, “Would that you might meet us doing right...” Moreover, part of that duty in addition to fidelity to our vocations in life is to be alert, wide awake, and aware of **His Presence here and now.**

**Advent** is that season in which we make a new effort to rouse ourselves from spiritual sleep and wake up to the many ways He reveals His Presence in our midst. When we watch and wait, we discover His Presence in the word and Sacraments, in the sick, the hungry and homeless, and in the events of life.

**As we receive Christ in Holy Communion** today, the fruit of that should be that we wake up to His Presence in others and that in turn we become His Presence to them. Pope John XXIII sums it up well when he says, “**Remember - you are the eighth Sacrament.**”