

Not Meant to Frighten

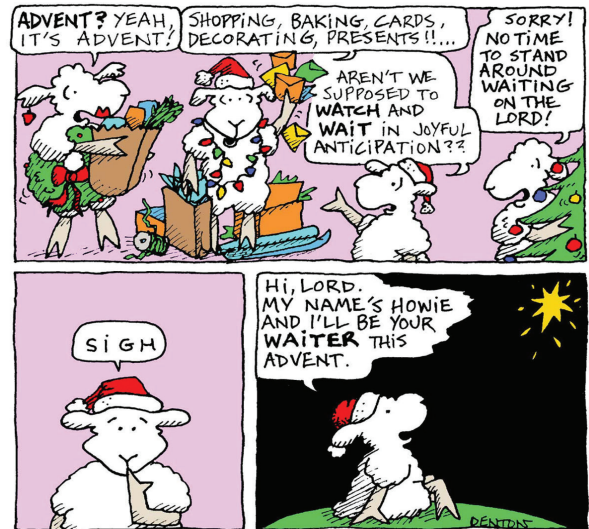
This Week's Readings at Mass

- Isaiah 2:1-5 • Zion, the messianic capital
- Romans 13:11-14 • Christian use of time
- Matthew 24:37-44 • The need for watchfulness

This reading can be unsettling. A reminder of how so many died in the catastrophe of the flood in Noah's time, the image of some people being snatched away from their work while others are "left behind," the description of a thief coming in the night—all are disturbing images. The final words of the passage "Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour" can feel frightening in this regard.

In Jesus' time, when his Jewish people were oppressed under Roman rule, they envisioned God's arrival in terms as we have just heard. Rather than being frightened at the prospect, they looked forward in hope to God's arrival in the world to pronounce final judgment. When Jesus used the term "the coming" of the Son of Man, he used the Greek word "parousia." At that time, it referred to the arrival of a ruler, god, or deity who would visit a particular city or his people and bring salvation to them. Jesus was reminding them to hang onto that hope as they waited for what must have seemed like forever.

Today our attention is more likely caught up on the daily matters at hand rather than longing for God to put an end to a miserable world. If that is the case, Jesus challenges us to stay awake, be more alert, and be *present* to what we are doing because we don't know when things might change in an instant. If we knew we or a loved one only had a year to live, or a month, or



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"It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

Sheepish Question:

What holiday preparations are taking my attention away from the coming of the Lord?

a day, what would we want to be doing up until the end? Posting on social media? Working overtime? Eating or drinking until we feel sick? Probably not.

This passage is an invitation to reevaluate how we spend our time—and to not take tomorrow for granted. How would Jesus want us to spend our time if we were to die tomorrow? Let's awaken to that—and start today.

Questions of the Week

- 1 Thinking about people and peoples today and throughout history who have been oppressed and mistreated, can you see how they might find hope in such a passage?
- 2 What do you want to be more vigilant about this upcoming week? How do you think Jesus is inviting you to spend your valuable time and energy?

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