**1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT [2nd December, 2012]**

READINGS: Jer. 33:14-16 / 1 Thess. 3:9-13 / Luke 21:25-36

THEME: STAY AWAKE

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Beloved, imagine you are anticipating with great excitement a game/programme that would take place at 2am (because of time difference between your location and the venue of the event). Now how would you feel when you wake up only to realize that you missed the great game/programme because you had dozed off. Jesus, therefore, after telling us about the spectacular ‘opening ceremony’ that will precede his second coming, enjoins us: ‘**STAY AWAKE**, **praying at all times** for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to hold your ground before the Son of Man’ (Lk. 21:36).

In the case of Christ’s second coming the fact that we do not know the day or the hour makes it more imperative to STAY AWAKE. In his first coming, many in Israel knew that he would come, but they didn’t know the day and hour, and so many were taken by surprise when he was born in Bethlehem. Jesus doesn’t want us to be taken by surprise at his second coming so he says, ‘STAY AWAKE’. To understand well what it means to ‘stay awake’, let’s first consider what it means to be ‘asleep’.

SLEEPING

Let us look at the natural phenomenon of sleeping, and then we can relate it to spiritual sleeping. In a NATURAL SLEEP:

* One is alive but not conscious of his/her environment.
* One can’t see what is going on.
* One can’t hear.
* One may dream.
* One is inactive.
* One is vulnerable (cf. Samson in Judges 16:19).

SPIRITUAL SLEEP (ASLEEP IN SPIRIT)

Similarly, one is asleep in spirit when:

* Physically alive but spiritually dead because of sin.
* One can’t see or appreciate God’s blessings in his or her life; nor see the evil or sin in his/her life.
* One can’t hear the word of God or pay attention to it.
* One thinks this world is the ultimate real world (as in the case of dreaming in a natural sleep).
* One is not active – in investing one’s talents; not doing good to the needy.
* One is vulnerable in spirit – easily overcome by temptation, sin and evil.

One night, in my childhood, I was sleeping outside when my brother woke me up to get into the bedroom; rather I started walking towards the gate of the compound, until someone called me back. Similarly, those who are sleeping in spirit may walk away from heaven when the Lord comes again to wake up all mankind. So let’s STAY AWAKE!

STAY AWAKE

How then do we stay awake? Staying awake is contrary to what we have said about sleeping:

NATURALLY AWAKE:

One who is awake:

* Is alive and conscious of his/her surroundings.
* Can see what is going on.
* Can hear.
* Can make a distinction between a dream and reality.
* Can be active.
* Can defend him/herself or call for help.

STAYING AWAKE SPIRITUALLY:

Similarly, one who is awake spiritually is:

* Alive in the Spirit, bearing the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
* One who can see or appreciate God’s blessings and graces in his or her life.
* One who is attentive to God’s word (because man can’t live on bread alone but on every word of God).
* One who knows that the ultimate reality is beyond this physical world.
* Active in using God-given talents, being responsible and caring for the poor and needy.
* Using prayer and other spiritual weapons to call for God’s help and protection.

CONCLUSION

Some people have missed their flights because they overslept. Similarly, those who sleep in spirit may miss their flight to heaven. Therefore, let’s STAY AWAKE, so that we catch the flight to heaven – the flight whose departure time we don’t know! STAY AWAKE! AMEN!