**1st SUNDAY OF AVENT [1st December, 2013]**

READINGS: Isaiah2:1-5 / Ps. 121 / Romans 13:11-14 / Matthew 24:37-44

THEME: STAY AWAKE

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

Beloved, in the past few Sundays, the gospel readings seem to emphasize one important message of the Lord. That is, to be prepared for the Lord’s coming which will occur unexpectedly. A good teacher repeats important lessons. Today, Jesus, the best teacher, repeats this very important lesson: ‘STAY AWAKE, for you do not know on what day your Lord will come’ (Mt. 24:42). St. Paul also re-echoes the same message in the second reading: ‘now it is high time to AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed’ (Rom. 13:11).

So today’s message it titled simply as ‘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 he/she is physically alive but spiritually dead because of sin.
* If one can’t see or appreciate God’s blessings in his or her life; nor see the evil or sin in his/her life.
* If one can’t hear the word of God or pay attention to it.
* When one thinks this world is the ultimate real world (as in the case of dreaming in a natural sleep).
* If one is not active – in investing his/her talents, etc.
* If one is vulnerable in spirit – easily overcome by temptation, sin and evil.

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 (which is like a passing dream).
* Active in using God-given talents, etc.
* Using prayer and other spiritual weapons to call for God’s help and protection.

**CONCLUSION:** Some people 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!