

## St Pius & St Anthony Homily 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Advent Year B

We surely don't want to miss or sleep through any encounter with Christ especially if it's our last shot. We have to watch everything, all times. So even with Jesus' example today of being ready, when he uses the line about the end being "like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his work...." (Mark 13:34). I think we presume it is us staying back at home, and waiting around the house. But if we don't want to miss or lose any possible tests of being prepared and ready to meet Jesus-too, we want to watch our comings and goings-traveling or going out to others. By saying, 'each has his own work', Jesus gives a universal charge to everyone having something to do, being watchful and ready. I must say that hearing that line, I may first think of the staying back at home part. But what about thinking of the possible surprise of the traveler (again, we are only pilgrims here on earth-al of us travelers thru) Travelers suffer being unprepared, too. Think about getting ready for a trip. Did you do everything before you left? I don't know about you, but always the first chunk of time on any trip of mine, is filled with these questions, "Did that toilet stop running? Did I put the jelly/butter back in the fridge? The garage door did close, didn't it - I dead-bolted the door didn't I?" and the biggest one, "Did I turn the coffeepot off?" That one always gets me. The coffee pot? Though I gotta say that every time I have gone to the frustrating trouble of returning all the way back, the pot has always been off—which then makes a worrier think, "Okay, if not the coffee pot, then what is my body telling me I did forget? Something?" But about that coffee pot thing, what is worse (well okay burning the house down beats it all), but more likely, is it the terrible stink of smoldering crusted coffee, or the job of trying to remove that hardened black bubbly lava rock that is welded to the bottom of the pot? But again, being prepared and watchful means trying to see things from a lot of different angles: so normally we think about the servants left behind to keep up their duties waiting for the traveler to return. But what about the traveler being prepared too as he/she hits the road? I'm sure everyone has their checklist for travels too. Gassed up, everything loaded, all needed calls made-paper stopped, mail forwarded, and neighbors alerted. St Paul speaks about just this too, in his letter 2 Corinthians 5:9-11 when he speaks about each of us standing under judgement from God, wherever we are. He says, "Therefore, we aspire to please God, whether we are at home or away." So in this challenge of Jesus we don't want to miss out any duty we have to serve Him, at home or out and about.

Great line in first reading: Isaiah 64:4 “Would that you might meet us doing right, that we might be mindful of you in our ways!” Imagine an on-spot inspection, or pop-audit, Don’t we wish that it was being done on our one of our good days-maybe our best day of week? Or that we knew exactly when it was coming. Some people get that lucky. I remember knowing of a big company that had had a change in boss-leadership, and several financial changes came down the line to the satellites, and people asked, “What is this all about?” to which headquarters readily admitted, “We are getting ready for the audit?” Isn’t the idea that an audit will bring about those changes afterward: sounds like an admission of guilt! So Isaiah says, “would that you might meet us doing right?” and we hope, too, that on the last day or our last day, we ‘might be doing right?’ But I bet we all say, “Shouldn’t we already be doing that?” Answer, “Yes”.

Advent is that for us! Get ready: if not already, consider this a tip. God’s coming. So even our short reading today gets *right at that* and repeats it! Did we pick up the three times “Watch”? In this short reading, in Mark 13:33, 35, & 37, Jesus commands “Watch”! How are we doing? Are we ready? Well, I like how the gospel of Mark handles the surprise inspection of the actual apostles themselves. This three time command is given to the apostles in chapter 13. Well, in the very next chapter 14, we hear about the last supper and afterward, and three times Jesus will command his apostles to what? “Watch and pray” in the garden of Gethsemane. How do they do? Well, the first check-in after praying a while, in verse 37, Jesus finds them sleeping. Then warned, later in verse 40, Jesus comes upon them, and they are ‘asleep’. Then off to pray alone one more time, he returns in verse 41, and guess NOT, Jesus again finds them ‘out’. But at that point the guards and Judas bust in, and render any audit beyond useful. Too late then. So, they didn’t fare very well. On a sad note, it doesn’t end there because Peter will go on to fail his preparedness test again, later denying Jesus three times more in another courtyard (Mk 14:68, 70, 71). But whatever Peter did or didn’t do, it doesn’t remove the challenge from us today: to watch, be ready and on the ball. Jesus in Mark is good about this method of three whistle stop warnings: What I mean is that halfway back in Mark’s gospel Jesus had three times tried preparing (in chapter 8: 31, 9:31 and 10:33) his apostles that the hardship suffering & cross was ahead for him and for them as disciples. Part of their discipleship training was to be ready at any moment for a spot test. When is my number called? When is the master returning? Or, am I ready to go out the door for the journey there. So we have to be awake watching, too. Am I watching? Am I ready today; right now?