

Don't Miss Your Chance

This Week's Readings at Mass

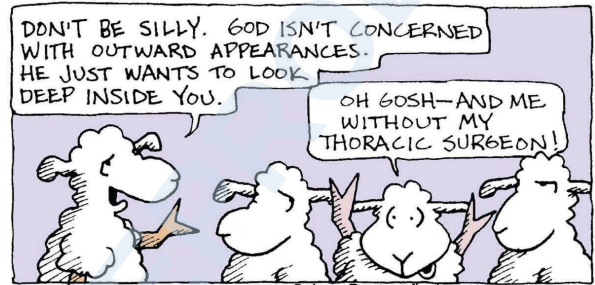
- Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7 - Prayer for the return of God's favor
- 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 - Thanksgiving
- Mark 13:33-37 - Need for watchfulness

As Advent begins, we hear Jesus warn his listeners—and us—to be alert and watchful. What are we to be watching and waiting for? In the Gospels, Jesus was referring to his Second Coming and the end of the world as we know it. In fact, the apostles and his early friends and followers were so certain that Jesus was returning soon that they believed it would happen in their lifetimes.

Now, 2,000 years later, we sometimes take for granted that the world probably isn't about to end anytime soon, despite the COVID pandemic, natural disasters, and endless war. Yet maybe Jesus is still calling us to be alert to all of the opportunities we have to love and be loved right now, today, because we don't know how much time we have left on this earth.

It is common to hear victims of natural disasters or tragic violence say, "I never imagined this would happen to us. I never imagined this would happen here." Maybe part of what they are saying is that they were sleepwalking through life, taking their lives and the lives of their loved ones for granted.

If we knew we only had a short time left to live, how would we want to spend our remaining time? What



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"Would that you might meet us doing right."

Sheepish Question:

How will I present myself when Jesus comes to me this Advent?

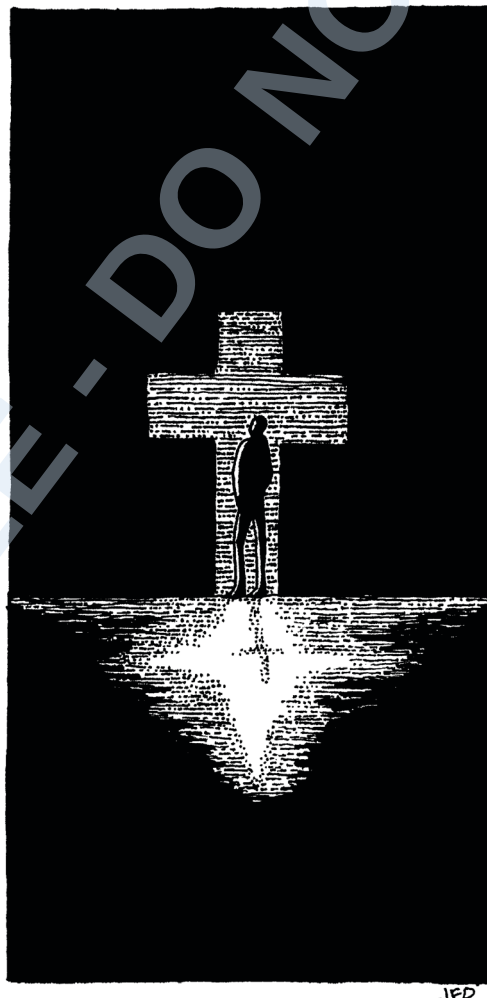
if we knew our child or spouse or parent would be taken from us soon? How might our priorities change? Even if we aren't motivated to stay watchful for the end of this world, Jesus is still calling us to be alert so that we don't miss the opportunities to love and serve the people of this world while we have the chance. What is passing us by because we are too busy and distracted to notice?

Questions of the Week

① Every few years a small Christian group predicts that the end of the world is in sight. We might not pay much attention, but how would you live life differently if you only had a few weeks or days to live? What would you change? What concrete actions would you take?

② In what particular area(s) of your life do you take things for granted? How could you change?

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A Long Road Ahead

This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 - Promise of salvation
- ▶ 2 Peter 3:8-14 - Christ will come in judgment
- ▶ Mark 1:1-8 - John the Baptist

In the First Reading, the prophet Isaiah addressed the Jewish people, who were captives in Babylon. It was a time of great darkness in the history of our Jewish ancestors. Their country had been conquered, and their people were captured and taken away to a foreign land. Isaiah was speaking to people who knew what hopelessness felt like, people who understood personal and national darkness and despair. They didn't know if their nation would survive the conquest or if they would ever see their homeland again. Home was 500 miles across the wilderness as the crow flies, but a 900 mile trek because of the terrain.

Isaiah proclaimed words of comfort, and promised that their ordeal was about to end. He knew the journey back home would be long and hard. The people would have mountains to climb and valleys to cross as they passed through the rugged landscape, but Isaiah promised that God would be with them to smooth the way. He assured them that their God was coming with power, and like a shepherd, would feed his flock and lead them with care.



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"Prepare the way of the Lord ... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Sheepish Question:
How can I recognize and follow the urging of the Holy Spirit within me?

Questions of the Week

- 1 Of all the disturbing situations in the year 2020, which one(s) disturb you the most and make you long for God's relief or comfort?
- 2 In what personal situation(s) are you experiencing mountains, valleys, and rough country?

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