

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

[1] Byzantine Liturgy Anaphora – similar to the Roman Rite (Canon)

[2] 1 Peter 5:8-9

[3] 1 Jn 15-17

[4] The Penny Catechism

[5] Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 298

[6] In Conversation with God vol. 1 pg. 2

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Gospel Reading – Matthew 24:37-44 – Roman Missal

Jesus said to his disciples: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

Spiritual Reading - From St. Bernard

God reveals to you, as he did to the children, what is hidden from the learned and wise: the true ways of salvation. Meditate on them with the greatest attention. Steep yourselves in the meaning of these Advent days. And above all, pay heed to him who is approaching; think whence he comes and whither it is he advances; consider his purpose in coming, the ripeness of the times, the route he may choose for his approach. Such speculation cannot but be good. Our curiosity is far from being an idle one. The Universal Church would not celebrate this Advent time with such solemnity of devotion did it not contain within it some great mystery.

Live in This World, but Not of This World- Lesson and Discussion

“they were eating and drinking...they did not know until the flood came and carried them away.”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus points out that just like in the time of Noah, nobody was ready for the flood, so too the people of this age will not be ready when Jesus comes again. Christ teaches us to “stay alert”, and know the hour is at hand. We also heard similar things in the second reading when St. Paul told the Romans to stay awake, stay away from the temptations of the flesh, and to put on Jesus Christ.

In the Byzantine rite of the Catholic Church the phrase “be attentive” is used often. The phrase is especially used before the congregation hears

the Word of God, and before the consecration of the bread and wine, “Let us stand aright, let us stand in awe, let us be attentive to offer the holy oblation in peace.”[1] As we are attentive at the Divine Liturgy, we are to be attentive in life. As we wait for the Word and the Word made flesh in the Eucharist, we also wait for the second coming of Our Lord. We must be attentive, if not we will be devoured, the Church prays each Night during Tuesday Night Prayer, “Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith”[2]

What’s wrong with enjoying the things of this world? If God made it, and he said it was good why can’t we enjoy it? The things of this world can be good, and when we enjoy them with temperance and moderation, they are fine. However when they become our God, when we focus on them more than on God who made them, then we are sinning. St. John wrote, “Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and the pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever.”[3]As part of our daily spiritual exercises as Catholics, we should remember that in all things of the world we always ask two questions. These two questions can save our soul from being consumed by the world. “As to my eating, drinking, sleeping, and amusements, I should use all these things with moderation and with a desire to please God.”[4] We should ask ourselves, “Is what I am doing in moderation?” and “Is what I am doing pleasing to God?” **Reflection Question: Is there something in my life that I love more than God? What steps will I take to make the will of God my primary focus?**

Tripping Billies by Dave Matthews Band- POP CULTURE CONNECTION - 4:10

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsUuYkMHV4w>

This lively song epitomizes the Gospel reading. The song is sung about a guy and girl enjoying the world to excess (drinking, eating, sex, drugs). They are so wrapped up in the world that they do not care what happens to them in the afterlife. Why is it wrong to “eat, drink, and be merry” when we know we’ll die someday? The problem with this is our actions here in this life have consequences. If we live only for the joys of this world that is all we’ll gain and obtain after we die instead of everlasting joy in heaven. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Happiness comes from the pleasures of the world of sensations; happiness comes and goes it is temporary. We can think of joy as a permanent and eternal happiness. “Joyful emotions affect the body, but they are essentially in the higher faculties of the soul. Joy differs from pleasure [happiness]... joy is possessed by angels and human being and its source is the rational will.”[5] We sing during Christmas “Joy to the World” not “Happiness to the World”. The Word did not become flesh so that we could be happy, but that we can choose through our free will, eternal joy, and eternal peace. We choose the peace and joy that comes only

from Christ.

How do I live in the world, but not of the world? We must realize everything has a purpose or is a means to an end. We spoke of marriage as a means to get two spouses to heaven, the end. Concerning anything we are engaged in, we must ask the question, “What is the ultimate end of this”? Is this leading to heaven or away from heaven? Is this leading me anywhere at all?

Think of times when you were wrapped up in the world and not focusing on the Lord.

What are some things you can do to be ready if and when the Lord comes in your lifetime?

Why would the Church choose this reading for Advent? Jesus knows that not everyone will be ready when he comes again, just like the world was not ready when he was born. Few expected the coming of Christ. Most were so focused on their lives and what was important to them in this world, they were blind to the coming of Jesus.[6] The Church realizes that to get in the true spirit of the Christmas season we must prepare ourselves, meditate, and wait in joyful hope just as our ancestors did thousands of years ago. Each night during Wednesday Night Prayer the Church prays Psalm 130 which says, “My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word. My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak. Let the watchman count of daybreak and Israel on the Lord.” The watchman had the night shift, he was working through the night and looked forward to the sun rising because that meant he could get off work and go home, to eat or sleep or simply relax and not be “on guard”.

Sometimes we stare at the clock and could not wait for a particular thing to be over. For example, it could be school or work. If a person has ever had this feeling then they know that their desire is the end, the end of the work or school hours. This is how we count on the Lord, we know he will come and we eagerly await. Psalm 130 is fulfilled in the Eucharist. “My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word”. We know as Catholics that Word became flesh. Christ is among us! Catholics have the Word made flesh in the Eucharist, and we await the second coming, not the first or the rapture.