

# From the Homily Library of Fr. Callistus Iyorembor

First Sunday of Advent - Year B – November 29, 2020

## Watchful Servants

Often times when I meet new people, they ask me Fr., where are you from? When they hear “Nigeria”, their response is usually along the lines of “*You are long way from home.*” Sometimes then they want to know how long a flight it is to Nigeria. The answer: about 16 hours or more of flying time. The reason I share this with you is that there are certain words I hear while I am on a flight that put a little bit of fear into me; these words make my mind wonder - what if something happens? Words we with which we are all familiar: “*We would like to take a few minutes to show you some of the safety features of this aircraft.*” Then follows a little lecture about seat belts, emergency exits, use of oxygen masks but there is one more that really scares me. It is about life jackets: “*Your life jacket is placed under your seat in the event of having to ditch into the ocean. Please use it.*” I realize that the idea behind the cabin crew telling us about safety features is for us to be prepared for the unexpected.

Friends, this is precisely what our Liturgy today is about: **preparing for the unexpected.** We see this message clearly in today’s Gospel where Jesus gives us some instructions regarding the ‘flight of life’. “*Be watchful! Be alert!! for you do not know when the time will come.*” Notice this is a flight in which all of us are involved and Jesus wants us to be prepared for the unexpected. Just like faithful servants, Jesus wants us to keep ourselves in a state of readiness/preparedness. Not in fear of dying, as I am sometimes when I board a plane, but rather in trust and hope.

Today we begin the great season of Advent. Advent is from the Latin ‘Adventus’ which means “Coming” We are expecting the coming of Jesus at Christmas, but most importantly, we are expecting His coming at the end of time. The Parousia, the Beatific Vision “He will come again in

glory to judge the living and the dead." It is that moment of the separation of the goats from sheep that we heard about last Sunday will happen.

"As we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The question is: *"How prepared are you?"*

While I was writing my homily, I thought to myself "Wouldn't it be really nice if, when death comes, all our work was done, our entire task was completed and neatly bound together like a sheaf of wheat?" But we cannot be sure this will be the case because the moment of death is hidden from us, Jesus tells us today *"You must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."* We live in this reality that life is very precious, but we do not enjoy this world forever. Consequently, Jesus wants us to *"be like watchful servants who await their master's return, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks."*

What does it mean to be prepared? To be prepared doesn't mean to have accomplished everything one wants to accomplish. It means to be true to one's responsibilities in the present moment. We are called to be channels of peace; sowing love where there is hatred, pardon where there is injury, faith where there is doubt, hope where there is despair/fear, light where there is darkness and joy where there is sadness.

Christians who live up to their responsibility as fathers or mothers, sons or daughters, uncles or aunts are prepared for Jesus' return. To be prepared means we strive to be faithful to God and one another. Jesus wants us to be faithful in spite of any setbacks or failures. We draw hope and courage from the words of Mother Teresa: *"We are not called to be successful, only to be faithful."*

*"I say to you: Be watchful! Be alert!! For you do not know when the time will come."*