

SUNDAY PLUS



Stay awake!

A Year of the Word

We are not alone

by Gráinne Treanor

Today's Gospel instilled fear in me when I was a child. If there was one reading that made me feel like "going to confession" in preparedness for my own end or "the end of the world", this was it. It was about getting caught, punishment and eternal damnation. Of course, my theology was immature and my interpretation out of context. I'm not sure it was much clearer to those who had the difficult job of explaining it to children.

Years later, with the benefit of study and life experience, that childhood fear has eased. Study reveals a context – the coming of the Son of Man

and the kingdom of God. The Gospel of Mark shows Jesus trying to encourage both preparedness for that time and patient endurance of whatever suffering precedes it. Experience reveals that suffering – including sudden and severe suffering – is entwined in life's journey. It is not something we must always accept unquestioningly, but neither is it something we should expect to always escape. Recently, we have seen suffering shake even those who normally have the privilege of feeling in control of their destiny.

We cannot be complacent or banish fear. We do not know the day of our individual ends or the end of time as we know it. But we are not alone in our waiting. As Christians, we support each other in our staying awake, balancing unavoidable suffering with patience, solidarity and sometimes action as we wait in hope for the salvation of all humanity.

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Learn from others

by Br Royston Price
C.Ss.R.

Christ tells us forcefully in the Gospel to stay awake. This certainly means looking forward to his return at the end of time, but perhaps we can take this attitude into other parts of our lives? I may be very keen to listen to God speaking through scripture, but am I so keen to listen to God speaking through my neighbour, particularly the ones I don't get on with? The Lord wants what's best for us and never misses an opportunity to help us grow in love, so perhaps we should be awake and alert to the lessons we can learn from those around us. An attitude of respectful listening can help people see the dignity

that they have in your sight and, indeed, their dignity in the sight of God. This Advent is the perfect time to "wake up" to what matters most and our "alarm clock" might not be sitting on our bedside table, but might actually be our neighbour.

Br Royston Price is the Vocation Director for the Redemptorist London Province.

Do I count my blessings?

by Eldred Willey

Dr Donald Nicholl, Rector at Tantur, near Jerusalem, inspired many people with his book *The Testing of Hearts*. He also inspired people by the way he finished his life. In great pain with terminal cancer, he looked out of his bedroom window one evening and rejoiced in the beautiful full moon which he could see.

The angel Gabriel calls on Mary to rejoice, although nothing has happened yet. She is simply to rejoice in God's favour: the fact that she is chosen, that God has good plans for her. Her agreement opens the way to the great miracle.

We always have something to be thankful for, always have blessings to count. It is in recognising the

good which God is already doing for us that we open the way to receive greater things. So let us choose to rise above discouragement and despondency, for God loves to give good things to the joyful.

Eldred Willey works in communications for the Diocese of Northampton.

"May Jesus help you to discover the beauty of being alive and awake. Alive and awake."

Pope Francis

Loving Lord, I don't always enjoy waking up. Sometimes I'd prefer to sleep. Help me to be awake and alert to life's challenges during Advent. Don't let me doze off halfway. Amen.

Today:
Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1. 3-8
1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Mark 13:33-37

Monday:
Romans 10:9-18
Matthew 4:18-22

(S) Solemnity
Wisdom 3:1-9
Romans 10:9-18
Matthew 4:18-22

Tuesday:
Isaiah 11:1-10
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday:
Isaiah 25:6-10
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday:
Isaiah 26:1-6
Matthew 7:21. 24-27

Friday:
Isaiah 29:17-24
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday:
Isaiah 30:19-21. 23-26
Matthew 9:35 – 10:1. 6-8

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 40:1-5. 9-11
2 Peter 3:8-14
Mark 1:1-8

