



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

First Advent Sunday, 3 December 2017

Multimedia

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we begin the journey of Advent, which will culminate in Christmas. Advent is the time we are given to welcome the Lord who comes to encounter us, and also to verify our longing for God, to look forward and prepare ourselves for Christ's return. He will return to us in the celebration of Christmas, when we will remember his historic coming in the humility of the human condition; but he enters our heart each time we are willing to receive him; and he will come again at the end of time to "judge the living and the dead". Therefore, we must always be vigilant and await the Lord with the hope of encountering him. Today's liturgy introduces us precisely to this evocative theme of vigilance and waiting.

In the Gospel (cf. Mk 13:33-37) Jesus exhorts us to *take heed* and *watch*, so as to be ready to welcome him at the moment of his return. He tells us: "Take heed, watch ... for you do not know when the time will come.... Watch therefore ... lest he come suddenly and find you asleep" (vv. 33-37).

The person who *takes heed* is the one who, amid the worldly din, does not let himself be overwhelmed by distraction or superficiality, but lives in a full and conscious way, with concern first and foremost *for others*. With this manner we become aware of the tears and the needs of neighbours and we can also understand their human and spiritual strengths and qualities. The heedful person then also turns *toward the world*, seeking to counter the indifference and cruelty in it, and taking delight in its beautiful treasures which also exist and are to be safeguarded. It is a

matter of having an understanding gaze so as to recognize both the misery and poverty of individuals and of society, and to recognize the richness hidden in little everyday things, precisely there where the Lord has placed us.

The *watchful person* is the one who accepts the invitation to keep watch, that is, not to let himself be overpowered by the listlessness of discouragement, by the lack of hope, by disappointment; and at the same time it wards off the allure of the many vanities with which the world is brimming and for which, now and then, time and personal and familial peace is sacrificed. It is the painful experience of the people of Israel, recounted by the Prophet Isaiah: God seemed to have let his people err from his ways (cf. 63:17), but this was a result of the unfaithfulness of the people themselves (cf. 64:4b). We too often find ourselves in this situation of unfaithfulness to the call of the Lord: He shows us the good path, the way of faith, the way of love, but we seek our happiness elsewhere.

Being *attentive* and *watchful* are prerequisites so as not to continue to “err from the Lord’s ways”, lost in our sins and in our unfaithfulness; being attentive and being watchful are the conditions that allow God to permeate our existence, in order to restore meaning and value to it with his presence full of goodness and tenderness. May Mary Most Holy, role model for awaiting God and icon of watchfulness, lead us to her son Jesus, rekindling our love for him.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, last night I returned from my Apostolic Journey to Myanmar and Bangladesh. I thank all those who accompanied me with prayer, and I invite you to join me in rendering thanks to the Lord, who allowed me to meet those populations, in particular the Catholic communities, and to be edified by their witness. The memory of so many faces, tried by life but noble and smiling, is inscribed within me. I carry all of them in my heart and prayers. Many thanks to the people of Myanmar and to the people of Bangladesh!

In my prayers I also remember in a particular way the people of Honduras, that they may overcome the current moment of difficulty in a peaceful way.

I address my greeting to you, people of Rome and pilgrims present here. In particular I greet the faithful from Bratislava, Slovakia, and from Ludwigshafen, Germany.

I greet the group from Preganziol, Treviso, and the young confirmands from Mestrino, Padua; as well as the Romanian community that lives in Italy and that today is celebrating Romania’s national holiday.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday and a good Advent journey. Please, do not forget to pray for me.

Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*

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