Sunday, November 29, 2026 – First Sunday of Advent Year B

First Reading - Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1. 3-8

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Oh that you would tear the heavens apart and come down.

You, Lord, yourself are our Father,
Our Redeemer is your ancient name.
Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways
and harden our hearts against fearing you?
Return, for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your inheritance.
Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down
– at your Presence the mountains would melt.
No ear has heard,
no eye has seen
any god but you act like this
for those who trust him.
You guide those who act with integrity
and keep your ways in mind.
You were angry when we were sinners;
we had long been rebels against you.
We were all like men unclean,
all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing.
We have all withered like leaves
and our sins blew us away like the wind.
No one invoked your name
or roused himself to catch hold of you.
For you hid your face from us
and gave us up to the power of our sins.
And yet, Lord, you are our Father;
we the clay, you the potter,
we are all the work of your hand.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 79:2-3. 15-16. 18-19 R. v.4

(R.) Lord, make us turn to you, let us see your face and we shall be saved.

Second Reading - 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

The revelation we looked for, Christ Jesus our Lord.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace.

I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ; and God is faithful.

Gospel Acclamation

Psalm 84:8
Alleluia, alleluia!
Lord, show us your mercy and love,
and grant us your salvation.
Alleluia!

Gospel - Mark 13:33-37

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Stay awake! You never know when the Lord will come.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

Eyes Wide Open!
Reflection on the Gospel: 1st Sunday of Advent Year B
(Mark 13:33-37)
Veronica Lawson RSM

The first Sunday in Advent marks the beginning of the new liturgical year. It may seem strange to begin the church year with the parable of the watchful doorkeeper and a focus on the end or culmination of the present order of things. Is Advent not a time of preparation for Christmas, for the coming of the Christ child into the world? In contrast with Matthew and Luke, Mark has no account of the birth of Jesus or of the events leading up to his birth. From the very outset, Mark's interest is in the good news of Jesus the Christ and in the importance of "preparing the way" for the advent of God's reign of justice and compassion.

Our gospel reading forms the conclusion to Mark's so-called apocalyptic discourse. Apocalyptic literature emerged within Judaism in the context of crisis or persecution. Its message was that God's coming can reverse the sufferings of the present, a hopeful message for our troubled world, particularly if we envisage multiple "comings" and not simply an end-time return. Apocalyptic writings were intended to provide hope in the midst of disaster. While Mark's discourse is delivered as a farewell teaching to the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, the concluding verse indicates that it is intended for a wider audience: "what I say to you, I say to all...." Like Jesus' close followers, Christian disciples through the ages are invited to stay awake, to be on the lookout, to be alert.

The disciples are told to stay awake through the four watches of the Roman night: in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, and at dawn. The parable thus foreshadows aspects of Jesus' suffering that was to be compounded by the abandonment of his closest friends. Peter, James and John will fall asleep in Gethsemane. While the women will remain faithful, the male disciples will disperse and Peter will deny Jesus. We find our own experience mirrored in that of the disciples. It is easy to lose hope in the face of overwhelming violence and even to lose focus and walk away.

Advent is about recognising our tendency to be less than vigilant and even to turn away when our presence is most needed. It is about allowing the grace of God to take hold in our hearts, keeping us watchful for the sake of those on the edge and for the sake of a regenerated Earth. Most of us would agree that our Earth communities are in crisis. We need to be alert to causes as well as to consequences so that the cycles of violence might eventually be broken. Our gospel asks no less of us. As I look up from my writing, I see the magpies in the yard, ever alert, rarely asleep, ready to protect their territory and their young. The creatures of the earth can remind us that "eyes wide open" is the proper stance for gospel people as well as for magpies and black swans.