



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With the beginning of Advent, we have begun another liturgical year. This is Year A of the three-year liturgical cycle (years A, B and C). While there are variations, throughout the year, we will be following through the Gospel of Matthew (except during Lent and Easter, where we will get a healthy dose of John). Matthew is one of the Apostles, and writes to a church made up of mostly Jewish Christians, which means he makes use of many Old Testament and Jewish cultural references.

Throughout Ordinary Time, we do a walk through of Matthew, and, while not reading everything from the Gospel, we go sequentially. But we begin in Advent, which seeks out Scriptures that will fit the theme of the season and the specific week. Today, we hear from late in the Gospel of Matthew, as Jesus is warning his disciples to be prepared.

This is a strong theme in Advent – the call to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ. In these first weeks of Advent, this means focusing on His coming at the end of time. This does not, however, exclude us from pondering over how He comes for us at the end of our lives on earth (if we die before the second coming), and on His coming to us each day in the Eucharist and other sacraments, as well as His dwelling within us through the Holy Spirit. In all of these things, we are called to surrender more fully to God and His love.

The thing is, sometimes His love doesn't comfort us in *this* moment. Sometimes love delays. In those times, we can begin to lose our trust in God – like Adam and Eve in the Garden. When we lose our trust in God and in His tender, merciful, superabundant and provident love we begin to take matters into our own hands. We start seeking our fulfillment in what we can grasp. Sometimes that looks like filling ourselves with sensual pleasures (entertainment, food, sex, drugs and alcohol). Sometimes that looks like trying to combat our insecurities with power, wealth, things, and the acclaim of others. Sometimes that looks like trying to fill our existential loneliness by flying to serial relationships or pornography. Sometimes that looks like trying to overcome our abiding sense of our own weakness and contingency by seeking to lord it over others and exercise temporal power and influence over others – even at the expense of their good.

None of these satisfy. None of these last. None of these will fill the void. Jesus is reminding us to seek God *now*! In those times of emptiness, we combat the temptations away from God by focusing on and making acts of trust in His promises – that He has made us His children in Baptism (I John 3:2a “**Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed**”), that He loves us and is pleased with us (Luke 3:22 “**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased**” – spoken to Jesus, and us by Baptism).

Too often, we delay, though. Jesus reminds us, “**Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come**” (Matthew 24:42). Even though sometimes the feeling of His love delays, He never does. He is always there with us, and will give us enough to get through whatever trial, emptiness or loneliness we may be experiencing. May we always trust Him and His love, and turn to Him to receive all that we need!