

## BE WATCHFUL AND BE ALERT, FOR WE ARE NOT SURE OF THE TIME WE WILL BE CALLED

Being watchful or being alert or ready as we await some occurrences or events in our lives is not strange to us. We are always watchful or on alert whenever we know about upcoming severe weather. At the beginning of every season, most people prepare psychologically and materially. By now most people have stored their summer clothes and brought out their winter clothes. Today being the first weekend in Advent, Jesus told His disciples and tells us in the Gospel reading to be watchful, to be alert, for we do not know the time we will be called (Mark 13:33). We can be sure of certain things, but we cannot be sure when every event in our lives will happen even with our scientific knowledge. None of us knows the exact time he or she will die. Nelson Mandela once said: "Death is something inevitable." Death is not the opposite of life; it is for humans the end of earthly life that brings about the beginning of an endless life. One of my friends, jokingly, told me to stop talking about death, that it scares him, that he is afraid of not enjoying the fruits of his labor on earth. Personally, I think about death because it helps me to focus on the purpose of my life on earth, it reminds me of the fact that I do not have unlimited time to live on earth and encourages me to make use of my remaining time on earth judiciously. DEATH IS AN UNAVOIDABLE REALITY. People will not stop dying if we stop talking about death but meditating on the reality of death can positively influence our decisions and actions. It is because we are not aware of the time when we shall die and be judged by God, that is why Jesus advised us to keep watch like the servants whose master or Lord of the house traveled and who were not aware when he would return or come back. At the beginning of this year, we were not aware of what we would experience throughout this year. Most of the people who died this year were not aware that they would die this year. At the beginning of this year, most people who died in Israel and Gaza did not know they would die before the end of this year. I promised my aunt to visit her and celebrate my 14th priestly anniversary with her next year, but she died this year. Some people lost their jobs or found new jobs this year which they did not know would happen. Think about what happened in your life, family, parish, and the world that you did not imagine would happen before the end of this year. Be prepared for more can happen. We still have some weeks left in this year. There are so many things that happened in our lives this year that we were not expecting. Since the beginning of this year, we were not aware of what would happen throughout this year, likewise, none of us is aware of what will happen next year. This is not an invitation for us to be troubled or think a lot but a clarion call for us to be wise; to learn from experience. WE NEED TO LEARN FROM WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD NOW. Next year may be better or worse than this year. Only God knows how next year will be. To be on the safe side, we need to be watchful and alert. "The watchfulness Jesus calls us to in the Gospel reading is not meant to make us worry or to be fearful or tense. On the contrary, it is supposed to fill us with expectation and even joy as well as call us to a steadiness in doing what is expected of us until Jesus returns" (Fr Jerry). We can be watchful and alert by always doing what we would like God to see us doing when He returns. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE GOD TO SEE YOU DOING WHENEVER HE COMES TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM THIS LIFE? I would like God to see me doing His will, that is, loving Him and others as Jesus commanded and taught us. Please let us meditate on this question to know if we are now doing or living as we would like to be living when God comes to take us back. THE INVITATION TO BE WATCHFUL, ALERT, OR READY IS AN INVITATION TO LIVE OUR FAITH CONSTANTLY ON

EARTH. This has to do with trusting God and His will with our words and deeds. We show that we have faith or trust in God by trying to always do what He wants. Many people are trying based on their understanding and ability to please God. We need to encourage each other, rather than discourage each other. That we unintentionally displease God because of our human weakness does not mean that we do not have faith in God or do not trust Him. MAY GOD HELP US TO ALWAYS TRY TO PLEASE HIM, SO THAT HE WILL FIND US WORTHY TO JOIN HIM IN HIS KINGDOM WHENEVER HE CALLS US BACK TO HIMSELF, AMEN.