

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Is 63:16-17, 64:1-8 1 Cor 1:3-9 Mark 13:33-37

HOMILY

Today, we begin the great Season of Advent and the coming few days are part of the First week of Advent. As it happens, during this first week of Advent, come 2nd December more shops and facilities will open for those of us who have been rated under Tier 2. I can see that we shall be bombarded with so many messages over the next four weeks to leading to Christmas to compensate on the restrictions we have had. No doubt the media and shops will be urging us to move faster, stay busy, and spend more money on those **‘must have’ presents** for which we had no time to buy. We will be told and sold the idea that unless we buy more and more, and make up for the lost opportunities, our bleak Christmas will be worse. Let us not overlook that the pandemic is still here. Its’s momentum will not be slowed down by Christmas.

It is fitting, however, that there will be a very different message and set of values being offered to us through the gospels, the prayers and the liturgy of Advent. We shall be asked to prepare a way for the Lord, to stay awake, to make a straight a path for the Lord and to get ourselves ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. While we can’t simply ignore the shops, the media and the advertisements over the next few weeks, neither can we ignore the words and message of Jesus in today’s gospel; *‘Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come... what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!’*

Talking to a few people who are vulnerable in our community I have been amazed by how good people have been to their vulnerable neighbours. Therefore, let us not allow the excitement to get out shopping make the vulnerable members of our community feel alienated and lonely; forgotten and abandoned. To ‘stay awake’ means to pay more attention, it means consolidating our lives of love, of compassion and thoughtfulness. The message is clear: Live attentively.

- ❖ Attentive to people, to their words, to their silences, to silent questions, to every offer of tenderness.
- ❖ The pandemic is not over: let us not fall back from our good track record!
But also attentive to our magnificent planet, our common home: of its smallest and most indispensable creatures: water, air, plants.

“Be on your guard, stay awake” is the message!

Let us not be carried away!