

Have you ever gotten a piece of mail that said: “**URGENT! Time-sensitive materials enclosed!**”? If you are like me, even though there is an additional message telling me not to discard the envelope, I usually do discard it, once I discover what it really is.

As we begin the season of Advent, we hear Jesus speak to us in our Gospel reading with a great sense of urgency: “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. ... What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’” Unlike the junk mail that comes to our home or office, we are not to discard Jesus’ words. Just as we believe in the birth of our Savior which we celebrate on Christmas Day, we believe that He will come again.

In one sense, the season of Advent leads us to be reflective as we consider the meaning of Christmas. In contrast to the hustle and bustle of preparing for the holiday, with holiday music in the stores and on the radio right after Halloween, Advent calls us to prayer and worship, inviting us not to rush to the holy day, but to prepare ourselves for it.

But in another sense, the sense of today’s Gospel reading, there is urgency in the call to readiness. And so we need to be “watchful” and “alert.” We need to get ourselves ready for when Jesus comes again. But how do we do that? It seems that the Second Coming is taking a long time to get here. Don’t we have time to get ready? As Jesus says, we don’t know. And if we were to think about how important our relationship to God really is, would we put off doing what He calls us to do?

As I was reflecting on all this, I asked myself, “How can we maintain a sense of urgency and readiness for the long haul, without getting a little frayed, or complacent?” And it occurred to me that our life experience has something to tell us about this very question. When we go to work every day, do we not get ready? Depending on what job we do, we put on the power outfit or the uniform or the overalls so we are ready for work when we arrive. If we need to, we put on our ID badges, so we are recognized as part of the company or organization. If we are looking for work, we put on an appropriate outfit so we can present ourselves in the best possible way to a potential employer. We update our résumé. Something similar occurs if we are attending school. We put on our uniform or proper clothes, with the homework or the paper in hand, or the studies done so we can pass the test that day. Or if we’re at home, we still get ready by getting washed and dressed, with whatever plans we have made for the day.

What if we were to have that same kind of readiness for our life as disciples? What if we were to put on, in addition to the uniform or the outfit, or the overalls, the love of Christ? What if we were to wear, as another sort of ID, an attitude of faith and hope? I’m not sure we have to carry around a Bible, or wear a big crucifix to make sure others know we are people of faith. It seems to me to be more important to *act* and *relate to others* as people of faith, whether we are at work or school or home. To me, this kind of readiness would fulfill the words we hear from our first reading from Isaiah: “Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways!”

Just as it is with work, or looking for work, or going to school, or being at home, some days will be better than others as we strive to follow Christ. There will be times when we make mistakes. There might even be times when we are not too eager to get

up in the morning. But if we can remember how much God loves us, and that each day is truly a gift (the reason for Thanksgiving), then our eagerness can return, and our mistakes won't weigh us down! We have what we need to get ready. As St. Paul writes in our second reading from 1 Corinthians, "...you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." However long it may take for Jesus to come again, we can be alert to doing God's will for us.

May God continue to bless us all, and may we get ready to meet our Savior.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP