

## **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent**

### **R U Alert? The Lord is Coming!**

**Last Sunday afternoon I gathered with about 35 young men who came to play basketball. As is part of the bargain for free use of the gym, we spend an hour in reflection.**

**Since we were approaching Thanksgiving, I posed to them this question, “What do you want to give thanks for?”**

**Some spoke up and said they wanted to give thanks for family. Others were thankful for their jobs. Others for their child.**

**There was a second group of men, a smaller number **THANKED GOD** for their family, job and child (one specifically thanked God for his grandmother with whom he is now living with as he gets his life together). This group was alert to the fact that all the good things they have come from God.**

**Then there was one young man who said, (pause) well let me quote him, “ I thank God for sending his Son. And I thank the Lord Jesus for saving me and setting me free from sin. This young man was very alert and thankful for all God had done for him in Christ Jesus.**

**And finally there was about half of the group of young men who just sat there impatiently waiting to get back to playing basketball. They said absolutely **NOTHING**, hoping it would shorten the time before they could get back on the basketball court. One of the Better Men Outreach leaders reminded these young men that **EVERYONE** had to say something before we went back on the court. So you could image some of the**

answers they came out with. Most of them simply said, “ The same as everyone else has said.” Simply put, there was not a conscious bit of thanksgiving in them and there was no thought of God at all.

(Pause)

And I ask you once again, **R U** alert? Which group of young men would you belong to this morning afternoon)?

Are you aware of what you give thanks for?

Do you know to whom you are giving thanks?

Are you alert and thankful for the great gift of forgiveness given us in Christ Jesus?

Or are you just here, sitting in a pew, spiritually unconscious, not alert and aware of the presence of the Lord in your life? Do you just want to get back to basketball, or watching a football game, or go shopping or lose yourself in work or leisure?

The Lord is coming! **R U** alert?

Are you alert to the presence of God in your life?

Someone once said that God is no more present in church than in a local bar, but we generally are more present to God in church than we are in a bar. The problem of being present is not with God, but with us. We are not alert to his presence.

Often we think of our lives as impoverished, dull, small-time, not worth putting our full hearts into. But our lives come laden with richness, yet we aren't sufficiently present to what is there.

**These four weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas is a special time to be open to God in prayer. The secret of prayer is not to try to make God present to us (God is always present), but to make ourselves present to God. The secret to finding beauty and love in life is basically the same. Like God, they are already present. The trick is to make ourselves present to them. Rarely are we enough inside of our own skins, present enough to the moment, and sensitive enough to the richness that is already present in our lives.**

**Our experience comes brimming with riches, but too often we are not enough aware of it. All it takes is a little time in prayer, a few minutes of quiet reflection, saying a simple prayer, reading a passage of scripture, to become alert to the Lord's presence.**

**For instance, Jesus gives us a wonderful parable in today's gospel. A man goes on a journey and gives his home over to servants each with their work asking them to keep watch for his return. In their prayer, the early church easily interpreted this parable to mean that Jesus has risen and gone to the Father, but he will return at the end of time. They believed that we who are the followers of Christ need to carry out the work appointed to each of us and be ALERT for his return.**

**Remember our young men at Sunday basketball.**

**How many of them are alert?**

**Some of them got lazy and did not focus on the work of giving thanks. Obviously, they had not taken time to reflect and stay alert to God's actions in themselves and their world**

**How many of us are ALERT to the coming of the Lord each day?**

**How many of us take time to pray and focus on the presence of the Lord?**

**How many of us live with thankful hearts and do our daily work in the presence Spirit of God?**

**How many of us live in an awareness of God's goodness to us by sending Christ Jesus to make us part of his household?**

**(Pause)**

**I was visiting one of the families of our parish.**

**I was talking with an eight year old.**

**I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up.**

**He said without hesitation, "I want to be a priest!"**

**I asked him why he wanted to be a priest.**

**He said, "Because God has given me everything! He gave me birth!"**

**Now here is a young man who is alert.**

**Here is a thankful heart.**

**Here is a person aware of the presence of God.**

**R U alert?**

**Stay awake!**

**Stay alert!**

**The Lord is coming.**

