

**“Watch and pray!”**

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon a time**, on the dark, foggy night of April 15, 1912, the Titanic hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic and sank. Over 1,500 people lost their lives in one of the worst sea-disasters in maritime history.

Some years ago, a magazine recalled the great disaster and asked its readers this shocking – almost blasphemous – question:

**“If we’d been on the Titanic as it sank, would we have rearranged its deck chairs?”**

At first we’d say to ourselves,

**“What a ridiculous question! No one with an ounce of sanity would ignore the shouts of drowning people and keep re-arranging the deck chairs. No one in his/her right mind would ignore the wailing sirens on a sinking ship and stop to rearrange its deck chairs.”**

**BUT**, as we continue to read the magazine article, we see the reason for the strange question and we suddenly ask ourselves,

**“Are we, perhaps, re-arranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship?”**

**For example:**

Are we so caught up with material things that we are giving a ‘back seat’ to spiritual things?

**For example:**

Are we so busy worrying about making a living that we’ve forgotten about the purpose of living?

**For example:**

Are we so taken up with life that we’ve forgotten why God even gave us this ‘life’ to begin with?

Strangely enough, the question:

**“Are you re-arranging the deck chairs on a sinking ship?”**

is the VERY question the Church sets before us today, as we embark on this 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent into this new Liturgical Year.

Are we forgetting that this life is only a preparation for the life to come? After all, either we believe that we have an immortal soul or we don’t. It’s that simple!

And if we DO so-believe, then a rational person should act accordingly. Consequently, Jesus tells us something very important in today’s Gospel about this.

**What, exactly, is that you ask?**

**WELL—I am glad you asked that question!**

Jesus warns us in today’s Gospel:

**“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and ... the anxieties of daily life.”**

Rather, Jesus tells us to ... **‘watch and pray.’**

**‘Watch and pray’** for the coming of the Lord, which will signal the end of this life & the start of the next life...whether privately, i.e. ‘alone,’ or at the end of the whole world, i.e. ‘simultaneously.’

Jesus says elsewhere in the Gospel:

**“Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come... whether in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or in the morning.... What I say to you, I say to all: WATCH!”**

I will now give you a concrete example of what Jesus has in mind when He says to you, **‘watch and pray’** *...for the coming of the Lord.*

**Once upon a time**, some years ago, a Hollywood actor suddenly became seriously ill. The concierge-doctor informed the actor bluntly:

**“Your situation is desperate.  
We’ve got to operate within 36 hours if we are to have any chance to save you.”**

Later, after the operation, which was successful, the actor said:

**“I learned more about myself in those 36 hours than I had in the previous 36 years of my life.  
And what I discovered gave me a joy that I’d never experienced before.  
I discovered that... I wasn’t afraid of death. I had made it a habit to pray to Jesus every day of my life and to receive Communion frequently.  
And now, when He seemed minutes away from coming, I experienced the fruits of my prayers & my Communions. It was then I realized that Jesus and I were not... strangers.  
We were close... friends –thanks to those daily conversations and frequent Communions.”**

Blessed is the man or woman, who can say to the Lord when he comes:

**“Welcome, Lord!  
After all these years of ‘watching and praying,’ it’s good to see you... face-to-face.”**

**‘Watch and pray’** ...that the Lord will be able to say to you also:

**Welcome, dearest friend!  
After all these years, it is, indeed, good to meet you... face-to-face.”**

I close with this prayer from an unknown, American Indian:

**O Great Spirit, Whose voice I hear in the winds and Whose breath gives life to all the world,  
Hear me! I am small and weak. I need your strength and wisdom.  
Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.  
Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.  
Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.  
Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.  
I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy –myself.  
Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.  
So that, when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.  
Amen.**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you...  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.