

STAYING AWAKE!

One student at the University was heard in the stillness of the night shouting after his friend who was a distance away as they retired from the library. He said he had stopped beating thieves in the night. His friend stopped and demanded an explanation for such a resolution. He explained that he feared to beat Jesus in the process because Jesus said he would come any time including the night.

As we begin to prepare for the coming Second Synod of Africa in October 2009, the theme provides an important moment for us. The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: You are the Salt of the Earth+ You are the Light of the world+ (Mt.5:13, 14). According to the *Lineamenta* of the Second African Synod (2006:6), the situation in Africa has undergone great changes since the last Synodal meeting in 1994. These changes include social, economical, political, and spiritual ones.

The new realities confronting Africa today, the *Lineamenta* adds, need considerable and thorough scrutiny and study so that our efforts of evangelization do not fall on thorny or rocky soils. This is why the story of the university student must not be dismissed as a mere intellectual joke. In fact, today, as we begin Advent season, as we begin to prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus on Christmas and at the end of time, the season of Advent provides us with an opportunity to create an atmosphere of waiting in prayer. Advent calls us to a state of watchfulness. Jesus says; %You do not know when the time will come.+

Jesus takes this opportunity of this Advent season to call us out of slumber. He says; %Be on your guard, stay awake+ To underpin his important message of staying awake, he gives a parable of man going on a journey after assigning tasks to his employees with no indication of a return date. The employees have no idea when their master will return. All they know is that their master will return. It is only a foolish employee who will drop his guard and not watch out for his master's return.

In the same way, Jesus himself in the Gospel takes this opportunity of this time of Advent to call us to wake up from sleep. He says; %Be, on your guard, stay awake+ Jesus is calling us to arise from sleep and awake to the many things happening around us. He is calling us to open our eyes to the poor, awake to the suffering majority, awake to the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS, awake to the abuse of women and children and awake to what is happening to our neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe, South Africa and others. A Christian is not called to bury his head in prayer and say %each one for himself or herself+. Christian life is, first, a matter of keeping awake to the things which continue to oppress our brothers and sisters and rob them of their human dignity and those things which diminish the glory of God in them.

The Gospel is urging each one of us to stay awake because we do not know the hour, the time, or the form Christ will take when he comes. That is why St. Mathew 25:41-46 says some people will be thoroughly shocked when at judgment day Jesus will say, %Depart from

...nal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was
...at, I was a thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I
...me in, I was in need of clothes and you did not clothe
...did not look after me.+In shock, they will answer %Lord,
when did we see you hungry, or thirsty or a stranger or needing cloths or sick or in prison,
and did not help you?+Then the King will reply, %whatever you did not do for one of the least
of these, you did not do for me.+

Our generation is a generation ridden with many dark moments like poverty, corruption, drug
abuse, women buttering, unemployed youths, Satanism, high percentage of school drop
outs, land disputes/border disputes, HIV and AIDS and the list is indeed endless. HIV and
AIDS alone is now threatening and continues to pose the single greatest challenge to
humanity. Here in Zambia, there is no family or community which is not burying our brothers
and sisters. This calls for serious awakening and watchfulness to the reality of HIV and
AIDS and to its unprecedented havoc to our communities.

We as Christians, do not know when Our Lord will finally come, yet we know that he will
surely come. %he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you and me asleep. And %what I
say to you I say to all: stay awake!+

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

- In our ordinary daily lives, which situations do we need to awake to and be on guard
all the time?
- In what ways should we awake to these situations?
- What can I do at personal level to prepare myself adequately for the Lord's coming at
Christmas?

SKETCH

Have someone to act as a young lady who has just completed her diploma course in Social
Work. Every time she goes for interviews, she is not picked despite having the best results.
Others are picked because they have people they know on the panel. After two years of
unemployment, she is picked on merit by an organisation focusing on corruption. Since she
could not get a job because of corrupt practices, she makes sure she does not fall into the
corruption trap which disadvantages others. She becomes a model and finds intrinsic
satisfaction in her work and prays daily for the grace to resist falling into the trap. It is her
vigilance and patience that makes her get a job in a dignified manner.

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

- Lord, you come to show us our dignity as children of God, show us the way to a social
order that can incarnate that dignity, *Lord, hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*
- Lord, you are always attentive to us in every need, help us to comfort the poor by our
loving efforts, *Lord, hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*
- Lord, you come into our world to bring peace, may peace in our world, especially in
our country Zambia, be the fruit of peace in our hearts and homes, *Lord, hear our
prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*