

Ordinary 19C - 2022

Readiness - Watchfulness

A U.S. Army officer told of the contrast in his pupils during two different eras of teaching at the artillery training school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma (Home of the Field Artillery).

In 1958-60 the attitude was so lax that the instructors had a problem getting the men to stay awake to hear the lectures.

During the 1965-67 classes, however, the men, hearing the same basic lectures, were alert and took copious notes. What made the difference in the class of 65? They knew that in less than six weeks they would be facing the enemy in Vietnam.

I am awake:

It is said that soon after his enlightenment after days of fasting and meditation under a Bodhi tree, the Sidhartha Guathama Buddha passed a man on the road who was struck by the extraordinary radiance and peacefulness of Buddha's presence.

The man stopped and asked, "My friend, what are you? Are you a celestial being or a God?"

"No," said the Buddha.

"Well, then, are you some sort of magician or wizard?"

Again the Buddha answered, "No."

"Are you a man?"

"No."

"Well my friend, what are you then?"

"I am awake."

(Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield, *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom*). "Be awake, vigilant and well prepared" is the message of today's gospel. <https://youtu.be/8Kn-EkcrGws>

"I have sent you many messengers."

According to an old fable, a man made an unusual agreement with Death. He told the Grim Reaper that he would willingly accompany him when it came time to die, but only on one condition - that Death would send a messenger well in advance to warn him.

Weeks turned into months, and months into years. Then one bitter winter evening, as the man sat thinking about all his possessions, Death suddenly entered the room and tapped him on the shoulder. Startled, the man cried out, "You're here so soon and without

warning! I thought we had an agreement." Death replied, "I've more than kept my part. I've sent you many messengers.

Look in the mirror and you'll see some of them." — As the man complied, Death whispered, "Notice your hair! Once it was full and golden, now it is thin and white. Look at the way you tilt your head to listen to me because you can't hear very well. Observe how close to the mirror you must stand to see yourself clearly. Yes, I've sent many messengers through the years. I'm sorry you're not ready, but the time has come for you to leave." (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

Harry Andersen was ready:

The day will come when we get the message saying that the time has come for us to die. We are called to be ready for this time by having Faith and Hope in Christ. Harry Andersen was ready. He had terminal cancer, but he kept his sense of Faith and Hope alive.

His pastor could tell he was ready because they talked about Christ's death and Resurrection and what this event means for us when we die. In addition, a sign of Harry's Faith and Hope was expressed in the humor he shared with his pastor.

After Scripture reading and prayer, Harry told the pastor the story of a man who was dying of cancer. He was bedridden on the second floor of his house. He could smell the aroma of chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven downstairs. He loved chocolate chip cookies. As a matter of fact, they were his favorite. He forced himself to get out of bed and crawled to the flight of steps leading downstairs. Each step brought new pain to his body, but he had to have some of those chocolate chip cookies. When he got to the bottom of the stairs, he crawled to the kitchen table and reached up for a cookie.

Suddenly, his wife appeared out of nowhere and slapped his hand with a spatula. "Why did you do that?" he cried out. "Those cookies are for your funeral reception," she said. — Harry Andersen laughed out loud as he told the story. The pastor rolled on the floor with laughter at the unexpected ending. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).