

Advent 1B - December 2023

Unheeded warning:

Early on Sunday morning, June 30, 1974, a hundred young people were dancing to the soul-rock music at Gulliver's in Port Chester, on the border between New York and Connecticut. Suddenly the place was filled with flames and smoke. In a few minutes 24 were dead, burnt by fire, suffocated by smoke, or crushed in the exit passage by the escaping youngsters. According to the Mayor of Port Chester, the dancing crowd ignored the repeated and frantic warnings given by the band manager when he noticed the smoke. — Today's second reading passes on to us the warnings given by

Where Is Authority?

The British writer Arnold Lunn tells about one time he was on a boat trip when a certain lady was plaguing him with theological questions. He answered her with quotes from the Bible and from the teaching of the Church but the woman would not accept what he said. Then he interrupted her to say, "you must be a very inexperienced boat traveler. As you got on the boat I noticed that you put your left foot on board first. Everyone knows that you will have bad luck if you step on a boat with your left foot first!" The next time she came on board he noticed that she nearly tripped into the water in her effort to step aboard right foot first. Lunn thought it remarkable that she would believe the infallible Lunn in something that he had just made up, and that she would not accept the authority of the Church or the words of Scripture. So, too, we tend to complicate our lives and our prayer by looking for the extraordinary, when the Lord is to be found most often in the simple and in the ordinary. (by Gerry Pierse from *The End of the World... Again?*)

Surprise! Surprise! Life is full of surprises!

Some surprises are awesome. Someone will get an engagement ring for Christmas. Some surprises are awful. As long as we live, will we ever forget those exploding Twin Towers? Some surprises are a combination of awesome and awful. A parishioner called her pastor and said, "I need a little help. My father just won a 30 million dollar lottery. He is 96 years old, has heart trouble and I am concerned if I tell him, he will have a heart attack. Would you mind paying him a visit?" Of course, the pastor agreed. Sitting in the old gentleman's home, they talked about sports, the weather, and life in general. Finally, the pastor asked the old man, "Suppose you won 30 million dollars. How would that change your life?" "It wouldn't," said the man. "I would still have arthritis and still be 96 years old. In fact, if I had 30 million dollars, I would give it to the Church." That is when the pastor had a heart attack!

The season of Advent has arrived. Biblically speaking, Advent is both awesome and awful. It is "get ready" time. It is get ready, not just for Christmas, but for Christ. The One who was, who is and who is to come, has arrived, is here, and is yet to return. If that blows your sense of time and space, the Babe of Bethlehem is the present Christ who is returning as the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is time to get ready for Christ. On our way to Holy Communion today, let us consider the Christian Doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ, or the Parousia, as our Christian theology calls it. (Dr. J. Howard Olds) (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

Second Coming - Readiness

While on a South Pole expedition, British explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton left a few men on Elephant Island, promising that he would return. Later, when he tried to go back, huge icebergs blocked the way. But suddenly, as if by a miracle, an avenue opened in the ice and Shackleton was able to get through. His men, ready and waiting, quickly scrambled aboard. No sooner had the ship cleared the island than the ice crashed together behind them. Contemplating their narrow escape, the explorer said to his men, "It was fortunate you were all packed and ready to go!" They replied, "We never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was clear of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and reminded each other, 'He may come today.'"

St. Paul, and today's Gospel gives Jesus' warning to be vigilant and prepared for his coming as our Judge. (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).

Be Awake:

A man came to Buddha and asked him, "Tell me Buddha, are you a God?" "No, I am not a god." "Are you an angel?" "No, I am not." "Are you a prophet?" "No, not a prophet either." "What are you then?" Whereupon Buddha answered. "I am awake." — Most of us are not awake. We are always in slumber. We are not aware of our own thoughts, feelings, and actions. We function most of the time, like automata. The enlightened are those who are aware and awake. (G. Francis Xavier in *Inspiring Stories*, quoted by Fr. Botelho). (<https://frtonyshomilies.com/>).