

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“Be watchful. Be alert. You do not know when the time will come.”

(Mark 13: 33)

I sometimes think of what will become evident to us when we enter into the fullness of the Kingdom of God. For example, we hear in today's gospel about the Second Coming of Christ and this refers to the definitive return in glory and judgment of the Son of God. But might we also learn once fully ensconced in the Kingdom of God to learn that Jesus came again into our world, into our lives, into very close proximity to us on a daily basis or a momentary basis. That we moved through life on earth pretty much unaware of how close the Lord was to us most times?

Jesus says to his disciples that it is really important for them to be watchful and to stay alert. Be watchful for what? Stay alert for whom? One of my favorite expressions, which I use all the time especially at funerals, is this: There is always much more going on in our lives and in the world than we know. God's grace is truly ubiquitous. But the Lord is very subtle. Unless we are really paying attention we will miss his presence and his grace in the moment.

For example, two Sundays ago I preached on the Fear of the Lord. It is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, however we don't like “The fear of the Lord.” But it isn't abject or craven or cowering fear. It is reverential fear, deep appreciation to the point of reverence for the person of God. Amazement. Awe even. In that homily I referenced an article I had read about how we do not appreciate our own selves enough, the holiness within that is the gift of God. We don't appreciate our own bodies or revere them or treasure them as the great gift they are.

Afterwards a parishioner emailed me and said: At my first Mass back, your homily included some excerpts from a work by Elizabeth Scalia. I can't tell you the comfort I experienced just being on the receiving end of the gentleness of your words and of her ideas. I felt as though I was involved in a good old fashioned conversation about content that was of real significance. I so miss genuine conversation and meaningful exchange of thought! Anyway, it was thought provoking and spoke to me deeply. I just wanted to thank you.”

Did I know that? No. Did the Lord arrange that? Why yes. Is it better if I know that is what is going on? Decidedly. Will I pay a little more attention and stay awake? That is the question of the week.