Homily Advent 1 Year B 11.28.26

Be watchful. Be alert. I live with 2 herding dogs, an Australian shepherd and a Blue Heeler. Watchful and alert could be their middle names. They never rest. In fact, the shepherd sleeps with one eye open. They alert us to leaves falling, a squirrel running through a yard five houses away and the arrival of the Amazon delivery guy would make you think that the world is going to end.

Between now and Christmas this gospel asks use to be watchful and alert. If we took these two dogs as our role models on how to be watchful and alert, we would all be exhausted by Christmas. In fact, many of us are exhausted by Christmas, but for different reasons.

What does it mean to be watchful and alert when Jesus asks us to do it? Watching is a form of waiting. We are waiting for Christ. And the funny thing is that Jesus is already here. Jesus has always been here. We are really not waiting, instead we are deeping ourselves in the Christ we already know. What does it look like to deepen yourself in Christ? We are all at a different starting point.

First, it might be helpful to know where we are starting. If someone asked us today, "What is your spiritual practice? We would all have different answers and all of them would be correct. But being correct doesn't mean that we can't be better. We know that a relationship with God or anyone requires nurturing and attention. So, the question for each of us is, "How do I nurture my relationship with God? How do I give God my attention?"

I decided that if I was going to preach about a relationship with God, then a good place to start would be to examine my own relationship with God. For today, I pray. The experiences of my day constantly call me to prayer. And what does this prayer look like and sound like? Many times, it begins before I get out of bed. I ask God to bless my day and use my hands for God's purposes. Some days I just wake up and say," Hi God. I am here!" And some days, I just get out of bed. And the rest of my day, I am talking to God, like a friend. And like any relationship, we have our good and bad moments. Through this exercise, I realized that I have a daily relationship with God. As a child, I would say prayer each night and that was my daily relationship. Later, it was a weekly relationship with God as I attended mass each Sunday. Relationships grow and change.

Advent is a time for us to be awake and to recognize God in our lives and in our world. It can also be a time to focus inward, to light a candle in the dark, to nurture that which is working for us and to leave whatever isn't working for us. In doing this, we are actively waiting.

Brother Lawerence, a 17th century monk wrote a book called, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. He believed that God was to be found in ordinary daily life. He says,

"The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

What a wonderful way to begin Advent, by practicing the presence of God in what is already in your life.

After: Be watchful and alert for you already have the gifts of the One who is coming.