

Have you ever missed an important appointment?

Have you ever been late for a plane?

**Have you ever wished you had said something,
after the moment for saying it had passed you by?**

**Have you ever missed an important opportunity
because you were too busy wasting time doing something foolish?**

**Have love, or fortune, or a good job, or an evening out with friends
passed you by because you weren't paying attention?**

**Have happiness, or a second chance, or a reconciled relationship
slipped through your hands**

**because you were, as Jesus put it,
"perplexed," or "dismayed," or "afraid"?**

**Have moments of grace passed you by
because, again as Jesus put it,
"your heart was drowsy with carousing, or drink,"
or just the "anxieties of daily life"?**

**Lacking the vigilance to recognize the day when it dawns,
the sun when it shines, the grace of God in front of you,
have you ever found yourself surprised and "trapped?"**

**Well, I think I've had all those experiences in my life
and I don't need "signs in the sun, the moon and the stars"
to point them out to me.**

**That's what Jesus is getting at in the gospel today.
He's warning us to be vigilant and aware
because a day will come when he will return
and he wants us to be ready for him when he comes.**

**He doesn't want us to miss him when he arrives.
And when will he arrive?**

**Well, on the hand, we don't know.
And, no - his arrival date isn't December 25th, 2006!**

**On the other hand, we know that he will come at the end of time,
at the end of the world.**

**And we know that he will come
when each of our own individual lives ends.**

**But most important is the reality that
"THIS is the day the Lord has made."
TODAY is the day when the Lord is among us.
DECEMBER 3rd is the day when the promise is fulfilled...**

We Christians are sometimes quick to say

that the retail world doesn't really understand Christmas.
Well, I'm not sure we've got it straight, either.
Sometimes we speak and act
as if Jesus is to be born 22 days from now on the 25th.
But Jesus isn't going to be born again.

Too often Christians speak of God as if
God is somewhere "over there," or "up there," or "out there"
and either he has to make his way to us, or we need to move towards him.

But the reality of faith is this:
Jesus is here. Now. Already. Forever.
And he's here not only around us, not only among us - but he's *within* us.
Jesus is inside us, and he's not going away.
He doesn't go away when we spend too much, or drink too much
or carouse too much.
He's with us now, no matter what we do or fail to do.
His very name, Emmanuel, means this same thing: God-with-us.

What the Lord doesn't want to happen
is for us to miss our "appointment" with him.
He doesn't want us to wish we'd spoken to him
after years of wasting our time and words.
He doesn't want us to miss him because we were too busy
doing foolish things.
He doesn't want us to be miss his gifts to us
because we weren't paying attention.
He doesn't want the love he offers us to slip through our hands
because we were "perplexed or dismayed or afraid."
So, Advent has not very much to do with all the busy-ness
of the Christmas season.
Advent is about recognizing that God already lives among us,
is born within us, and comes to us every day, every night,
every moment of our lives.
Advent is about being "vigilant" and not missing
what the Lord offers us every day.

Our hearts easily become drowsy with the anxieties of daily life,
with the merry-go-rounds we live on,
with the ways we fill ourselves up with what we don't need.

The Eucharist, each week, reminds us that in the simplest of things,
like bread and wine, the Lord is present to us
and in offering himself to us as food,
he desires once again to live within us.

May the sacrament we celebrate and receive at this table
make us vigilant for the Lord's presence
among us and within us - today!

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