

SUNDAY PLUS



Stay awake

A Year of the Word

by Sr Janet Fearn
FMDM

Don't be caught napping

How often have you fallen asleep whilst watching television, missed crucial parts of the story and woken up only in time for the closing scenes, which you couldn't understand because you'd literally "lost the plot"? How often have you forced yourself to stay awake, perhaps by doing puzzles whilst following the programme?

Jesus describes the sleepy householder who accidentally missed the burglar's visit. Had he known the burglar's plans, he would have done everything in his power to stay awake. Instead, he gave in to his tiredness – and then the burglar struck!

It's more serious when dozing causes us to miss Jesus. Of course Jesus didn't mean that taking a nap might stop us from meeting him. He did mean that we should make the effort to be alert, our eyes and hearts open to his

presence in the different circumstances of our lives.

One very hot day, in the company of an Indian friend, I visited a Hindu home and was immediately given a glass of deliciously cold water. My friend explained the Hindu belief that, as we don't know what God looks like, if a family doesn't welcome a stranger, they might unknowingly lose the opportunity to welcome God into their home.

Perhaps, during Advent, we could learn something from this beautiful practice? Instead of nodding off and missing Jesus, we could try to stay alert and ready to welcome him? It might be hard – sometimes we'd rather take the easy way out – but wouldn't it be a shame to lose out on seeing Jesus just because we didn't make the effort?

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.



Take heart!

by Max Mathews

When Matthew discusses the second coming of Jesus, he says "You do not know on what day your Lord is coming." When you think of "coming", you might envisage him descending gloriously to us from on high. But meeting your maker – a popular synonym for eternal rest – could be the other way round, going to be judged at the heavenly gates when we leave

our earthly bodies, rather than him coming to us.

So, urging us to stay awake, to be vigilant, is not referring to physical wakefulness but instead spiritual awareness of our mortality. This is not for any morbid reason but simply because we should glorify God by our lives; live as if each day is our last, especially as no-one knows when we will die. But take heart! As told to the Romans, our salvation – eternal life – is nearer now than first believed.

Max Mathews is a young Catholic who is studying journalism.

We do have a choice

by Phil Ferguson

"You might just as well say," added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, "that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe!'"

So it was that when Alice met the Mad Hatter, the March Hare and Dormouse in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Dormouse progressed – if that is the right word – from being a cushion for his two companions, to having them stuff his head into the teapot. Sleepy and passive, Dormouse didn't seem to think about where he was going, what he was doing and what others were doing to him.

Advent begins today and we are challenged to wake up. Just how much of a test will the next four

weeks be? Will we drift from day to day, not really noticing the journey towards Christmas? Will we greet each day alert and eager to move towards celebrating the birth of the one who never sleeps in his care for us? We do have a choice.

Phil Ferguson is a former teacher.

"If we see Christmas only through the lens of consumerism, as a worldly celebration, Jesus will pass us by, and we will not find him. Let us await Jesus, and let us desire to await him in prayer."

Pope Francis

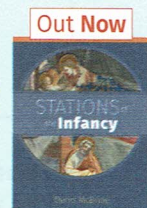
Loving Lord, let my heart be open to you this Advent. Let me forget about the busyness of the world around me and focus on you. Let me walk steadily in your love and your hope, my eyes fixed on you, whom I love more than I can say **Amen.**

Stations of the Infancy
Denis McBride

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A wonderful way to prepare for Christmas.



Today:
Isaiah 2:1-5
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44

Monday:
Isaiah 4:2-6
Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday:
Isaiah 11:1-10
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday:
Isaiah 25:6-10
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday:
Isaiah 26:1-6
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday:
Isaiah 29:17-24
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday:
Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
Matthew 9:35 – 10:1, 6-8

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 11:1-10
Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12