



**Cycle A First Sunday Advent**

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

The Christmas decorations are up in the shopping centres and we have not yet celebrated Advent.

The call of Advent to pause and consider our wakefulness, is easily lost. Rather than bemoaning the loss of our Christian festivals to commercialism we can see it as a challenge to hold our centre and put a greater effort into community celebrations.

Advent is a season of beginnings and our southern landscape proclaims it. Blossom has given way to the lush greening of the landscape. There are calves in the paddock and under the leaves of the grape vine miniature bunches of grapes begin their journey to maturity.

As Paul says, "Morning is the best part of the day. Throw off the old as you throw off the bedclothes. Face the new day knowing that the Christ you have put on will enable you to be alert to seize the opportunities to bring God's healing love to all."

Paul also speaks of living honourably, of living in the light; that is of stepping out of the shadows, so that we can live without pretence.

From Isaiah we hear a kind of hymn for new beginnings. God's dwelling place is like a mountain. As mountaineers now flock to Everest, so the people of many nations come to God seeking to be instructed in the way of peaceful co-existence. He tells us to make ploughs from our armaments. This is the very antithesis of "spend more on defence" and "view every stranger as a terrorist". In the early years of the third Christian millennium violence of thought or action is still the sin that hardens the hearts of most.

The reign of God, the kingdom of God, proclaimed by Jesus and begun in Jesus, heralds the beginning of the new age. We cannot define this new age we can only study the images that Scripture provided. What are the signs of the new age?

A mustard seed that is very small but can grow strong and reach outward.  
Bread rising in a warm patch on the kitchen bench as the yeast works its silent transformation.

A net shimmering with dancing silver as it breaks the surface of the water and requires a group effort to bring it to the boat.

What are the signs that you see?

The gnarled rose wood that newly produces Hope, Peace or Mercy; the community that mourns with the victims of disaster or outrage; the few who struggle to get

justice for the group; there are many signs of hope around us. We too are called to be a sign of hope, of God's love made visible.

Matthew's Gospel also calls for watchfulness. The imagery seems harsh, the unexpectedness of flash floods, one survivor from a car accident, a tornado's selective path through a neighbourhood, all of these are the more devastating because of the lack of warning.

Matthew re-enforces the message by adding, "If you knew when a burglar was coming you would keep an eye out."

We all know how to be vigilant when it concerns our possessions so let's be vigilant in the service of God and our neighbour.

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