

## **Watch**

*A Missionary Commentary on the  
Sunday Readings*

## **Sunday Readings**

Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

[USCCB link to the Sunday Readings](#)

A lot is happening liturgically today. This is the First Sunday of Advent. It is also a new liturgical year and so many of our gospels will come from the Gospel of Mark. Today is also the Feast of St. Francis Xavier who, along with Saint Therese of Lisieux, is a patron saint of mission.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four gospels, with only 16 chapters, although it was the first one written. Mark's gospel is like a quick charcoal sketch rather than a paint rich portrait. Today's reading is an excellent example. The story of a man "traveling" is also found in Matthew (25:14-30) with the talents and Luke with coins (Luke 19: 11-27).

Mark's gospel is blunt. Jesus, the King of the Universe, and Judge of Humanity, is gone. He will return. Until then, we are in charge, "each with his own work," and we need to be watchful, alert.

What are we watching for? We are watching for the many ways Jesus reveals himself in human need. Do we notice? Do we let the need of others – hunger, thirst, illness, prison – move us to action? We are also watching for signs of hope. Signs that humanity is – however slowly and painfully – becoming more and more Christlike.

The church declares many missionaries saints – St. Francis of Assisi, Saint Francis Xavier, St. Therese of Lisieux, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, and Blessed Stanley Rother are a few that come to mind. These men and women are signs of hope. Human beings can be Christlike. These missionaries stepped outside of their comfort zone, crossed borders, learned the language and customs of strangers while living as a stranger far from their home, and focused whatever abilities they possessed in acts of love for others.

It is easier to connect with others today but it is harder to be in a relationship. We live in a technological bubble so we cannot truly encounter another person, let alone someone from a different country, language, culture, or economic class. How do we step outside of our bubble, so we are able to see the needs of others and signs of hope?

Watch. Get to know someone in need without immediately addressing their need. Be with and for them as they discern their next steps to a better life. Lots of people are

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coming to our country for a better life. Let's figure out a way to welcome them rather than contain them. We need to truly see first so we act well – with dignity and solidarity for all. “What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”

## **Notes on the Sunday Readings**

### **First Reading**

We are sinful people, says the prophet Isaiah, and “our guilt” carries us away. And yet, God is our father. He uses our guilt, like a potter working clay, to redeem us.

### **Psalm**

This psalm of lament hopes that God himself will shepherd his people. Our help, the face of God, is found in the strength of “the son of man.”

### **Second Reading**

Saint Paul celebrates the fidelity of God who calls us “to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

### **Gospel**

The message is clear. Watch. Be alert. The lord of the house left us in charge, each with their “own work.” He will return. We do not know when or how. It could be in the middle of the night. It could be sudden. Be alert. Watch.

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