

“Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.”
(Mt 24:42)

Have you noticed how often your life just drags on because you are not living it fully but are waiting for “tomorrow,” hoping it will bring something “beautiful”? There is, indeed, a “beautiful tomorrow” in store for you, but it is not the one you expect. A God-given instinct leads you to look forward to something or someone that will be able to satisfy you. You look forward to a holiday celebration, a vacation, or some special encounter; but then when everything is over you are not satisfied, or not fully satisfied. And you start the routine of your life again without conviction, always looking forward to something else. The truth is that among the many elements in human life there is one that no one, including you, can escape: the face-to-face meeting with the Lord who is coming. This is the “beautiful tomorrow” you are unconsciously looking for, because you are made for happiness, and only He can give you complete happiness. Jesus knows how you and I search for happiness blindly; therefore, He warns us:

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Be vigilant. Be alert. Stay awake. For although there are many things that you can have doubts about on earth, there is one thing that is certain: some day you will die. For a Christian, this means to meet Christ who is coming. Perhaps, like many others, you try to forget about death. You fear that moment and live as if it were never going to come. Rooting yourself more and more in this earthly life, you say, “Death frightens me; therefore it doesn’t exist.” Yet that moment will come because Christ will certainly come.

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With these words, Jesus is speaking of his coming on the last day. Just as he was lifted up into heaven from among the apostles, so will he return. But these words also refer to the coming of the Lord at the end of each person’s life. After all, when a person dies, for him or her it is the

end of the world. Since you don't know if Christ will come today, tonight, tomorrow, or in a year or more, you have to be vigilant. You have to be like those who keep watch because they know a thief is coming but don't know the hour. If Jesus is coming, then this life is a passing thing. But that does not mean that you should undervalue it. On the contrary, you should give it the highest importance. You should prepare yourself for that encounter with Him by living a worthy life.

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You certainly have to be vigilant. Your life is not merely a peaceful chain of events; it is also a struggle. And a wide variety of temptations, such as those regarding sexuality, vanity, attachment to money, and violence, are your main enemies. If you are always vigilant you won't be taken by surprise. Those who love are always vigilant. Vigilance is a characteristic of love. When you love someone you are constantly watching and waiting for him or her to come. Every moment away from the one you love is spent with him or her in mind. For instance, a wife whose husband is away thinks of him as she goes about her work or as she prepares something for him. Everything is done with him in mind. Consequently, when he arrives at the end of the day she is overjoyed to see him. Similarly, when a mother is caring for a sick child her thoughts are with him even as she rests. In the same way, a person who loves Jesus does everything with Him in mind, encountering Him in the simple expressions of His will in every moment, and preparing for that solemn encounter with Him on the day when He comes. Consider what happened on November 3, 1974. At Santa Maria in southern Brazil a religious convention for 250 young people had just ended. Most of them had come from the city of Pelotas. The first chartered bus left with forty-five people who were joyfully singing. As they were travelling, some of the girls started to pray the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, asking Our Lady to help them to be faithful to God to the end of their lives. A short time later, the brakes failed and the bus went out of control around a curve, turning over three times as it fell a hundred and fifty feet. Six girls died. One who survived said, “I saw death but I was not afraid because God was there.” Another one said, “When I realized I could move, I knelt in the midst of the debris among the bodies of my friends, and I looked at the starry sky and prayed. God was there with us.” The father of Carmen Regina, one of the girls who died, said that she used to say: “Dying is a beautiful thing, Papa, because you go to be with Jesus.”

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The girls from Pelotas were watching because they were loving, and when the Lord came, they went to meet Him with joy.

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