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THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - NOVEMBER 27, 2022

Around the world, about 190,000 people will die today. Most of them will have known in advance that they were about to die. They will have had time to prepare themselves for the end of their lives, and will be blessed to have their family around them when they breathe their last.

However, some of the people who will die today won't be so lucky. About 1 out of 8 of them will die because of a sudden accident or because they will be the victims of violence. They will not be blessed with time to prepare and their families will not be with them when they pass away. Many of them will not even know what hit them.

All those people who will die unexpectedly today have plans for the future. They believe they still have plenty of time to realize their dreams. They may be saying to their friends right now, "See you tomorrow." How could they know that tomorrow will not come for them?

Death is not something we like to think about. For many of us, it almost seems unreal. Though we know that we will die one day, it still seems unimaginable. Most of us believe that we still have many years of life ahead of us. The truth is that none of us really knows.

Fr. Greg Stenebinger

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Many people have the attitude that death is not worth thinking about. Why ruin what life we have left thinking about how it all will end one day? Why not just live your life and deal with death when it comes? Other people have the attitude that we should just live for today without concern for tomorrow.

All the great saints, however, had a different attitude. They spent time meditating on their own death. It was not because they were morbid or had a death wish. Rather, it was because they wanted to be prepared for the moment when they would meet Jesus. They understood that they would be accountable for everything they did and said during their lifetimes. Knowing that they're lives were short, they wanted to make the most of the time they did have.

In today's gospel, Jesus is speaking about the end of the world when He will come again in glory. We will not know in advance when it will happen. We won't have time to prepare for it. It will come upon us not like a cancer diagnosis but like a sudden accident. It will come violently, not peaceably. Jesus uses the example of Noah's flood. People were making plans for the future, but the flood waters wiped them away. Jesus also uses the example of workers in the field or grinding grain in a mill. While they are involved in those everyday activities, the end times will come unawares. Finally, Jesus

uses the example of a thief. Burglars don't alert homeowners or businesses that they're planning to rob them. Just so, when Jesus comes again, there will be no warning.

So, Jesus tells us that we must be prepared. One of two things will happen - either He will come again in glory during our lifetime or we will die before that happens. It is impossible for us to know which will happen first, just as it is impossible for most of us to know how or when we'll die. So we have to be prepared.

Saint Paul also speaks to this in today's second reading. He urges us to wake up. Whether we will die today or a hundred years from now, our death is closer today than it was yesterday. Whether Jesus will appear again today or 10,000 years from now, it is closer today than it was yesterday. So, we have to start today to live our Christian faith seriously and intensely. We cannot afford to waste any more time.

Today we begin the Season of Advent. The word "advent" means "coming to". This is the time when we prepare to celebrate Christmas, when God came to meet us in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was born into our world to save us. But it is also a time to remember that God comes to meet us every day.

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So, let's not waste any more time. Let's begin to make choices that enhance our spiritual lives. Let's open our minds and hearts to all the graces that God wants to give us in the present moment in preparations to celebrate Christmas. The best way to prepare for the birth of Christ is to welcome Him into our hearts and homes every day. When we live with a sense that our lives are short and that the future is not promised to us, we will make the most of the present. Rather than take our lives for granted or look to the future with a sense of entitlement, we will be grateful for the time we have. Then we will face death, no matter how it may meet us, with peace knowing that we will meet the Lord who has loved us and guided us all our days.

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