

By Fr. Christopher Szarke

Today's Gospel commands us to keep awake. We are told that we need to be prepared for the coming of Jesus. We are told that we don't want to be asleep when he arrives.

How do we stay awake? Some of us have been taught that there is some sort of virtue in running ragged, in being sleep deprived, and being consumed by the needs and expectations of the world while neglecting our own health.

The National Sleep Foundation determined the healthy amount of sleep for each age range, including the 14-17 hours for a newborn to three months old, various ranges of 10-15 hours between four months until age 5, 9-11 hours for a school-age child of six to thirteen years old, 8-10 hours for a teen, 7-9 for adults between 18-64, and then 7-8 hours after age 65.

We need to care for our health in order to effectively share in God's mission in the world. By focusing on an appropriate amount of self-care, we will be more awake and more present.

Today, this First Sunday of Advent, we begin to wait for the coming of the Christ Child. Our current circumstances could be an invitation for us to reinvent how we usually enter this season. We don't have to do as much. We may do spiritual reading or embrace adequate sleep as our spiritual practice or place more attention on connection in relationships. These are ways to support being awake and ready for the arrival of Jesus.

Amen.