

Wake Up! No sleeping off the turkey in the last pew today. It is time to get up! We all know that there is a time to sleep and a time to wake, but how we wake up really makes a difference.

For instance, if I accidentally forget to set my alarm clock, or if our 8 month old son Lars fails to wake me up at the usual 5:30 hour, and 5:30 quickly becomes 6:30 before I sneak a peek at the LED numbers, I am not a happy camper. I know that in order for Lisa and I to feed our dogs Gus and Grete, and our sons, Luke and Lars breakfast, make Luke's lunch, take him to school, and get ourselves ready fed, showered and dressed we will need to put more than just a little wiggle in it. We will need to *move*.

Most days I get up before everyone else and get things started in the kitchen and if Luke, our 5 yr. old, doesn't come down from the smell of food I have the pleasure of going to wake him up. Usually, I make up a silly song telling him how special he is and how much we love him. I usually tickle him a couple of times and before long he has a smile on his face and we are headed down the stairs, hand in hand. I recall my father waking me up the same way when I was a child... Those are the good wake ups!

But there have been some other very disturbing wake up calls that I received such as the phone call from a friend on the night of 9/11 asking me and Lisa to come over because her husband, our friend, had not been heard from....

And there have been many other calls in the middle of the night from friends and parishioners summoning me to a bedside for a final prayer and blessing and the many other calls on my "fire department pager" urging me to respond to a house fire or automobile accident.

Like me, you have had some good "breakfast in bed" experiences and some not so good, "falling to the floor instances as you tried to hastily scramble to put your pants on and walk at the same time", experiences. Today is the first day of the new Church year, a time of waking up and all three of today's lessons touch on this theme.

Our first lesson falls into the section of the prophetic oracle known as Third Isaiah. We recall that the return of the Israelites from exile was well underway. Prior to today's appointed reading the prophet has just given praise to God for past deliverance. -The way one gives thanks for a day that starts off with breakfast in bed. But now the prophet shifts gears and voices concern and frustration for God's apparent slumber during times of trouble.

–Like the way we also feel after fielding some of those calls in the middle of the night.

Paul tells the church in Corinth that they have every spiritual gift they need, yet in the verses that continue we discover that these gifts are not being utilized, they are dormant or in a state of hibernation. If they were utilizing these gifts to the fullest, the unrest reported to Paul by Chloe's people, the choosing of sides, and the boasting would cease. So Paul begins his greeting as a gentle wake up call to remind them that God has equipped them to foster peace, love, justice with each other and the world. It would if we also woke up to the fact that each one of us is also amazingly equipped for ministry by God through baptism!

Today's gospel can seem like a scary eschatological alarm clock making a racket at a time when we would rather just roll over and enjoy visions of sugarplums dancing in our heads. Who wants to deal with a darkened sun and moon and falling stars and a shaken heaven? Holiday shopping and visiting family and friends, eggnog, Christmas cookies and planning for that Holly Jolly, White Christmas is what we would rather focus on this morning, **BUT**, Jesus is calling us to root ourselves again in the true meaning of

Christmas. The word that the NRSV translates as “awake” as in “keep awake” is actually the word “watch”, like a soldier standing watch. It’s the same command issued by the master of the house to the doorkeeper during his absence.

To “watch” is to be circumspect, attentive and ready. To watch is to give strict attention. In the proceeding chapters Jesus enters Jerusalem and is hailed as David’s son. In the concluding chapters Jesus shares his last supper, is betrayed, tried, denied, mocked, stripped, struck, falsely accused, crucified and buried. Jesus wants his followers to pay attention to watch with him, to take it all in, and to understand his actions and the events as they unfold. BUT -The disciples couldn’t even keep watch and pray in Gethsemane, they kept falling asleep. Peter kept his distance and let Jesus out of his sight in the courtyard. The disciples kept their distance at the crucifixion...

We watched in horror the images of terror and death, evil and deep sorrow beamed to us from Mumbai, India’s New York. The Massacre carried out by ten suspected Muslim militants at 10 sites across Mumbai, the nation's

financial capital formerly known as Bombay, killed at least 195 people and wounded 295. Among the dead were 18 foreigners, including six Americans. The alleged attacker that was captured Mohammad Ajmal Qasam, told interrogators they wanted to go down in history for an "Indian 9/11".

But we are done; the crisis is over, back to watching Christmas Specials on TV and surfing for online bargains or worse Mall-ing it. We don't want to deal with anything negative- do we??? **BUT**, when we turn our head away from the pain and sorrow in the world we abandon our brother or sister to suffer alone. Self-righteousness, cynicism, self-centeredness, entitlement and fear – or a combination of the above, urge us roll over, hit snooze, turn our head away in judgment, disgust or fright.

But wait, before we turn our gaze and attention away, let us stay awake a little longer and pray in the garden. Let us pray for all who mourn the hundreds of victims like Rabbi Gavriel and Rivkah Holtzberg, the beloved directors of Chabad-Lubavitch of Mumbai. For five years, Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg ran a synagogue and taught Torah classes, and helped people dealing with drug addiction and poverty. "**Chabad**" is a Hebrew acronym for the three intellectual faculties of: *chachmah*-wisdom, *binah*-

comprehension and *da'at*-knowledge. Through disciplined study and prayer a person strives to live into the specific purpose for which he or she was created. "**Lubavitch**" is the town in Russia where the movement was based for more than a century. Appropriately, the word Lubavitch in Russian means the "city of brotherly love." The Holtzbergs were wide-awake, living their faith and sharing brotherly love when the sun turned black and the bullets began to fall. Let us also watch and pray for the Holtzberg's toddler son, Moshe, who managed to escape with the help of a nanny as he continues his life as an orphan.

Let us watch and pray for the Kai Scherr and her sons. She is the wife of Professor Alan Scherr and the mother of 13 year old Naomi who were in Mumbai on a spiritual retreat when their dinner at the Oberoi hotel was interrupted by death. A spokesperson for The Synchronicity Community, where the Scherr's resided in the US said, "Alan committed most of his adult life to meditation, spirituality and conscious living," "He was a passionate Vedic astrologer and meditation teacher who inspired many people to begin a journey of self-awareness and meditation. He was committed to making a positive difference in the world and devoted himself to the community he lived in."

But lets not stop with Mumbai, lets watch and pray for the people in Jos, Nigeria, where Mobs burned homes, churches and mosques Saturday. The death toll rose to more than 300 in the worst sectarian violence in Africa's most populous nation in years. More than 10,000 Nigerians have died in such violence in the last decade.

And let us not stop there, let us pray for our troops, and the people who live in Iraq and Afghanistan. And let us not stop there, let us stay awake.

When we refuse to shun our neighbor in need, we are alive with meaning and purpose. We are awake! Even when we choose to ignore, avoid or even hibernate with our spiritual gifts God continues to come to us and to gently nudges us awake. God comes this season with a song of hope that we can hear in the distance. O Come O Come Emmanuel. God comes this season with the promise of a child we can all embrace and call our own. We are roused by the joy that awaits- not only on Christmas Eve or Morning, in worship and family gatherings and Santa visits, but as the whole Christ event comes alive. When we recall how alive Jesus was in his ministry, and recall that he never turned away from a person in need, from someone who was ill or confused or alone or misguided or even hateful. We remember that God never took his gaze off of us- and that even more than clay on the potter's

wheel, we are God's crying child in the night and sleeping child in the day. Jesus came to us so in we would not have to weather hopelessness and despair alone. We are lifted by God's loving gaze, transformed by God's touch, nursed by our Lord's body and blood, and gently kissed awake. We wake because we know that we have a vibrant life to live in our waiting and watching. We are called to tend the flocks by night, to be the angles that herald hope, to heal the sick and welcome the stranger, to be the Christ. Yes we are roused from our spiritual slumber to be Christ for the world. Our eyes, our hands, our song, our intellect, our muscle, our humor, our possessions, our relationships, our occupational skills and especially all of our attention is needed, desired, and requested by Our God who desires that we receive yet another gift this year, the gift of being alive in Christ in this life- the gift of being awake.

Rise and Shine! Amen.