

## Gospel text

### **Matthew 24: 37-44**

37 For the new Adam will manifest his presence in a similar manner as the events of the time of Noah. 38 Indeed, at that time, before the flood, people were busy eating and drinking, getting married and organizing weddings, until the moment came when Noah entered the ark. 39 And the people didn't know until the flood that swept them all away. This is how the presence of the new Adam will manifest. 40 Then one can find two men in the field, but one will be selected, the other will be dismissed. 41 One may surprise two women milling in a mill, one will be selected, the other will be dismissed. 42 So be careful, because you cannot know on what date your master appears. 43 So this is what you must understand: if the master of the house had known at what time of the night the thief would break in, he would have taken care to prevent breaking and entering into his house. 44 Therefore you too must be ready; for it is at a time when you cannot guess that the new Adam appears.

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## Gospel commentary - Homily

### **The ark of new humanity**

"Are you ready for back to school?" "Are you ready for Christmas?" You know these messages that media bombard us with. Now the Gospel of this Sunday throws at us: "Are you ready for the coming of the Son of man?" Are we faced with the same type of message? You can guess that there is a fundamental difference. But which?

First of all, let's clear up some misunderstandings when faced with a text that can scare you with this allusion to the flood that killed a lot of people, this evocation of the scene of a thief who comes to rob in the middle of the night, this insinuation that there is unpredictable and almost arbitrary judgment (one will be taken, the other left) that awaits us. Let us understand the evangelist Matthew. We are around the year 80 or 85, several years after the death of the apostles, and the Christians were asking themselves serious questions about the reality of the Kingdom of God to which they identified the return of Jesus; the community was losing its energy and spirit, and little of the Kingdom's promises seemed to materialize, hence the question: is this return of Jesus true?

You, Christians of the 21st century, how would you answer this question? Your ancestors did not witness the return of Jesus, neither yourself, and it is possible that this will also be the case for Christians in the year 5,000 or 10,000. So who is the Gospel of this Sunday for? You can guess it is for us, but how?

To help understand the questioning contained in this story, two clarifications are necessary. The expression "Son of man", used by Jesus to speak of him, refers to the Jewish apocalyptic figure of humiliated people who believe that one day they will taste the great honors in the world of God and exercise the function of judge over the peoples of the earth. Basically, it designates the renewed man, as wanted by his Creator. So, I prefer to translate the expression by "New Adam". For Adam, which means: earth, designates the primordial man, and it is this renewed being that Jesus wanted to be. It is therefore new humanity that we are waiting for. In addition, the lectionary uses the future to affirm that this New Adam "will come". Greek uses a present. So I prefer to translate by "appears", i.e. he's at our door.

"So be careful, because you cannot know on what date your master appears."

This is the questioning of the Gospel. In other words, be constantly alert, because it is in the course of the days of your ordinary life that the opportunities arise to build your own humanity, and thereby contribute to new humanity. This is what Noah's ark represents with all of its creatures, the ark of new humanity that has escaped destruction. Being ready, therefore, does not consist, as we do on Christmas, in planning the purchase of your gifts in the face of a future event. But it is to be attentive and present to his body, his emotions, all the events and people in my daily life, and to detect the answers that I must bring to day. Because Jesus comes, he is there. There is no other way for individuals or people who hope for this new humanity.

The dramatic illustration of the fundamental nature of this vigilance comes from the events of September 11, 2001. Some time before these events, American intelligence agents reported that something serious was going on and that flight schools had to be investigated, but the political authorities are said to have completely ignored this warning. Because one was not vigilant, because one did not act in time, 3,000 people died and will never be with us again.

How does one become a vigilant being, you will ask me? How do you get ready to act at the right time? I think that it takes both a form of inner starkness to hear the various voices, and a fundamental faith that allows us to dare the future. One day, I accepted the opportunity of a job in another city, which involved the sale of the house, the distance from a city I loved and the uprooting of the whole family. Of course, I was jobless and I was on the lookout for everything that was available, but there was also the faith that everything would be fine, that this novelty would be a source of life for all.

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, August 2004