

## The Hope of Advent

We begin the Season of Advent with a simple message from the gospel of Mark: "Stay awake for the Lord!"

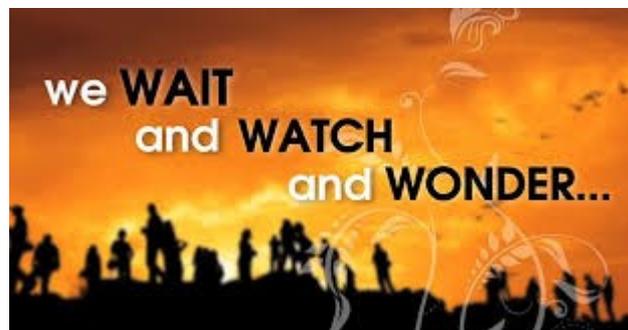
Jesus urges an attitude of attentiveness and hope that God will come to set right a world gone awry. *"Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'" (Mark 33:34-37)*

The four watches of night named by Jesus symbolize moving deeper into despair, until an all-consuming fear induces a "sleep," a loss of one's sense of purpose. The Advent scriptures focus our attention on these stark realities and remind us that we are called to wait and watch, not passively, but with a hope that comes from faith rooted in a God of love and in the goodness of humanity.

The Advent season reminds us that God has never forgotten us.

It invites the discouraged to rekindle hope and prepare to see God's love and truth in people and places where we may have never looked before.

**In what ways can we be "community" for each other and offer hope as we enter this season of advent?**



### What Is Happening on Manus Island?

(excerpt from New York Times, 2 Nov 2017)

The governments of Australia and Papua New Guinea each claim the other is responsible for relocating the men until a permanent solution can be found. Australia has pledged 250 million Australian dollars, or \$193 million, for the men's food and security at the facilities in Lorengau for the next year.

Julie Bishop, Australia's foreign minister, said on Thursday that it made "no sense" for the detainees to remain at the camp. But Nat Jit Lam, the regional representative of the United Nations' refugee agency, said the temporary housing was incomplete and unsafe. "I will not be bringing any refugee there to stay — not in that state," Mr. Lam told ABC Radio of Australia. In a statement issued Thursday, the agency said: "Australia remains responsible for the well-being of all those moved to Papua New Guinea until adequate, long-term solutions outside the country are found."

Australia has consistently said it will not accept the men for resettlement. They have all been given the option of permanent residency in Papua New Guinea, or applying to resettle in Cambodia or Nauru, the location of a second offshore facility run by the Australian government. None of the men still on Manus have accepted the offer, according to reports. American officials said dozens if not hundreds of refugees from Manus and Nauru would be accepted in the coming weeks and months. [About 50 men](#) already moved to the United States in September under a deal brokered by former President Barack Obama. [Jacinda Ardern](#), the new prime minister of New Zealand, also said this week she would honour a predecessor's pledge to accept 150 refugees. The Australian government has been reluctant to allow New Zealand to accept the men, fearing it would open a legal backdoor to Australia.

If those options do not work out, there is another possibility: Russell Crowe, the Australian actor, [offered on Twitter](#) Wednesday to provide housing and jobs for six of the men. Calling Australia's refugee policy the "nation's shame," he added, "I'm sure there'd be other Australians who would do the same."

## Prayer for Encounters with Strangers

***"I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (MT 25:35)***

In earlier times, perhaps we found it easier.

The brokenness of our modern world has released an unending tide of humans in migration. By land and by sea they come, from Sudan, Syria, through treacherous waters to Lampedusa, across parched deserts to the Mexican border.

*From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, "Can we build a country called Republic of Refugees? It will be the most peaceful country in the world."*

Our brother Francis implores us to open our hearts wide to God and says:

**RESPONSE: "Every stranger who knocks on our door brings an opportunity for encounter with Jesus."**

How to understand? How to welcome, when this migration touches our own exile? We the receivers; they the strangers. Their lives disrupted and now ours disrupted.

But you, O God, call us to be a Eucharistic community in which all are WE and none are strangers. *From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, "I take a mission to save as many lives as I can. It's my duty."*

**RESPONSE: "Every stranger ..."**

The numbing of UN statistics: 65.6 million persons in the world today are displaced.

O God, we cannot hold all of this. And how can we see so many as our brothers and sisters when cultures rub against cultures, communities transform overnight and fears constrict our hearts? Can we see the woman in her hijab as Mary fleeing with Joseph into the land of Egypt?

"When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The stranger who lives as a foreigner with you shall be to you as the native-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33-34)

*From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, "Dear world, can we stop killing each other and instead love each other? YES WE CAN."*

**RESPONSE: "Every stranger ..."**

Help us to remember, O God, that you call us to welcome, protect, promote and integrate.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:2) Touch our hearts with courage as you have provided our brothers and sisters in Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia and Uganda who have opened their doors widely to your searching and migrating people.

*From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, "Dear children, never lose hope. You are future of this world, we suffer now but we shall overcome."*

**RESPONSE: "Every stranger ..."**

(Written by Dr. Ann Carr of the Maryknoll Affiliates)

