

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

November 30, 2008

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: ISAIAH 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7

Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways!

PSALM 80

May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

2ND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9

He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: MARK 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come.

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Winners and losers! Winners and losers! On any given game day, the old adage goes; any team can beat any other team, regardless of talent, past records, or predictions to the contrary—Jaguars fans will be happy to hear that. One team will always seem mightier than the other, but the underdog always has a chance. After all, anything can happen once the players take the field and the game begins.

I believe Jesus is doing some coaching with his team in this week's Gospel. He's coaching us as well, reminding us: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when your time will come." We can hope our priesthood will be fruitful; we can hope our marriages will succeed; we can hope our children will grow to full stature as healthy, loving, responsible adults; we can hope our lives will be meaningful, but without faith in our Coach, we will not do what he coaches and we will not win the game of life. We do have an opponent in this life. An ironclad faith is essential in order to rise above life's rainstorms and prevail victoriously.

Faith, once planted, no matter how small, will grow if properly cared for and nourished until it becomes a factor to deal with. Faith requires a commitment to practice; practice keeps the team watchful, alert and ready for the game. For faith to really work, it can't be bothered by distractions. True faith looks beyond

the statistics, the odds, the predictions, and focuses on completing the job at hand in confidence.

Practice does not make perfect, losses are inevitable—the adage works both ways—on any given game day, any team can beat us as well! We must be watchful, be alert, be ready and have faith in not only our own chances but in those of the opponent as well—for when we fail to acknowledge his presence and skills and underestimate him, we are opening ourselves to the possibility of an upset.

Playing the game without faith would render the game meaningless. If we don't believe that we can realize greatness; if we don't believe there is a reward for diligent play once the game is done, then there is no reason to play at all. It is incomprehensible how anyone can take the field in any capacity without faith. Often in the game we must dream it and believe it if we are to do it.

Everything ever accomplished in the game began as someone's dream. Faith turns dreams into reality. If players have faith in their dreams and in the Coach who inspires them, and courageously act on them no matter what the odds, their accomplishments can be numerous as the stars, just as shining and important. And that is good news!