

At the University of Colorado (Boulder), Dr. Kenneth P. Wright heads up the “Sleep and Chronobiology Laboratory” which does research in the psychological and physiological issues surrounding sleep and wakefulness.

One of his areas of research is in what is called ‘Sleep Inertia’ - which is outlined in an article titled: “Waking Up is Hard to Do.”

According to research, during the first three minutes after waking up, a person can exhibit severe cognitive impairment - such as poor memory, slowed speech, impaired decision making and performance issues.

In the first ten minutes, some may continue to have difficulty speaking clearly or show difficulty in counting.

And over the next two hours – which, of course can vary from person-to-person – an individual may continue to show certain performance problems.

When a person wakes up, their heart rate increases; their breathing becomes more rapid and deeper; circulation and blood flow increase; the brain is flooded with various hormones and chemicals; and every organ in the body shifts into a more active (or waking) mode.

Today is the First Sunday of Advent.

In the First Reading and Psalm Response we hear the admonition to “*Come up*” and to “*go up*” to the House of the Lord ... on the Mountain of the Lord of Hosts. There is talk of “*peace*” on various levels - between nations, within the walls of the city, and within each person.

And in the Second Reading and the Gospel we hear the call to “*wake up.*”

The season of Advent is one of two penitential seasons the Church gives us to “*fix up*” our relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

Jesus tells us that up to the moment of the flood, everybody was on autopilot ... doing what they had always done. Everyone, except Noah and his family.

If we desire to make spiritual progress during this new liturgical year, it certainly behooves us to “*wake up*” to what is going on around us. To turn off the autopilot, and to take an assessment of our relationship to the Almighty ... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And similar to waking up bodily, when we “*wake up*” spiritually ... it will affect every aspect of who we are ... engaging us ... body, mind, soul, and spirit.

St. Paul expands on this ... going beyond the call to “*wake up*” and admonishes his readers - and us as well - to “*clean up*” and in a certain sense to “*grow up*.”

We are to “*clean up*” by putting away any “*works of darkness*”, and “*put[ting] on the armor of light*.” We are to “*grow up*” by “*conduct[ing] ourselves properly as in the day*” and “*put[ting] on the Lord Jesus Christ*”.

As we begin our new liturgical year ... entering into this holy Season of Advent ... “*let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord*” ... “*that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths*” so that we might receive His peace ... the peace that the world cannot give.

And as we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for the graces we need to “*wake up*” despite the slumber of the world around us. Let us cast off whatever spiritual inertia is holding us back from a fuller relationship to Jesus and to His Father. Let us “*walk in the light of the Lord*” ... putting on Christ ... and living in the light ... As we move forward into a new Church year and prepare to welcome Christ anew in His Nativity.