

SAID ED December 3, 2017

Stay Alert! Cows on the Highway!

As a fulltime paramedic, I typically worked a 24/48 hour shift. That means I worked 24 hours straight and then had 48 hours off. There were occasions when I worked even longer shifts, running calls all day and all night with little to no sleep. And, I lived about 50 miles away from my station. One morning, after having been awake for nearly 24-hours assisting sick and injured people, I wearily headed for home. The drive was an easy 4-lane highway with highway speeds. Roughly ten minutes from home, I caught myself drifting...my eyes could hardly focus. I opened a window for cold air and cranked the music, without reprieve. I knew the risks. I've tended to patients who were not prepared to drive, along with their surviving family members. But in the great words found in Wizard of Oz, there's no place like home. I prayed for God to help me arrive safely to the comforts of my own house and bed, praying "God, help me stay awake!"

This particular section of the Iowa 4-lane highway was surrounded by corn & soybean fields. There was nothing else- no houses, no electricity, no cattle, no working farms. As I came around a bend there, in the middle of a harvested field, was a portable electric sign that read, "STAY ALERT! COWS ON THE HIGHWAY."

My 50-mile commute was definite and I knew exactly (within a minute or two) when I'd reach my destination. I needed only to be alert for 50 miles. My life, my time here on earth, however, is not that defined. Advent, a time of expectant waiting, brings us great opportunity to survey our eternal journey and make continuous preparations for the final destination. While we await Christmas and the celebratory birthday party for baby Jesus, we are also preparing for His second coming. As we heard in the gospel reading today, we "do not know when the time will come." Advent is also a time of preparing our hearts to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, in the flesh, and in our neighbors.

Unlike my one time STAY ALERT! COWS ON THE HIGHWAY wakeup call (which I have never seen before or since this incident), Advent is an annual reminder that we must take time to prepare for our ultimate destination. Being watchful & alert helps me focus on the answer to where do I want to be in 200 years from today? I continue to pray for God to help me stay awake, spiritually because there's no place like home, our heavenly home. "May he not come suddenly and find you [or me] sleeping" Mark 13:36.

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P.S. Have you made your Catholic Ministries Appeal pledge as yet? Thanks if you have, but we need your help to reach our goal this year. Please pledge if you haven't done so as yet.

Have a great week.
