By Pat Haggerty

Often, some of our most significant messages come in the form of one word: Greetings! Congratulations! Bravo! Magnifique! Welcome! We received one such important message in last Sunday's gospel. The message was "Watch!"

That one word penetrated my very being during the liturgy. It has stayed with me throughout the week. The word rang in my ear like a thunderous whisper. "Watch!" It's as if we have come to the railroad track, and we think of the message---Stop! Look! Listen!

The message can't be clearer. We are at a juncture in our Christian lives. Not only are we supposed to heed the Gospel message---". . .you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming. . ." We must be ready at all cost and at any time. We must be ready and waiting for the Lord.

We must also be prepared to enter a new liturgical cycle in a new liturgical year. We are at the exciting precipice of a new beginning. Truly this is a new beginning for us as Catholic Christians. We are embarking on a journey of waiting for the Lord during this Advent season, and we are also embarking on a new journey exploring the biblical connections of the Mass.

To many Mass attendees, the changes in vernacular are just a way to get us confused. Why did they have to go and change a good thing? Well, the simple reason is that the translations are much closer to the original Latin translations and bring us closer to the Biblical meanings of many of the parts of the Mass. We seldom think of the Mass as a chronology of our faith's rich history. Yet, it is! It is the story of the redemption brought together in one beautiful, celebration of salvation history.

If we look at the Mass with new eyes and new ears, we will come to understand the utter beauty and meaning of this sacrifice of the Lamb. Jesus becomes our sacrificial lamb and this is re-created in every offering of the Mass.

This Advent as we sing, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” we are not only preparing for Jesus’ coming. We are also intoning the name Emmanuel, which means “God with us.” In each Mass, we experience the sacramental presence of Jesus. We experience Jesus in every possible way!

Let us all cherish the season of Advent. Let us be thoughtful as we prepare for Jesus and as we experience him in the liturgy. Let us wait in patient longing for Him, and let us “watch!”