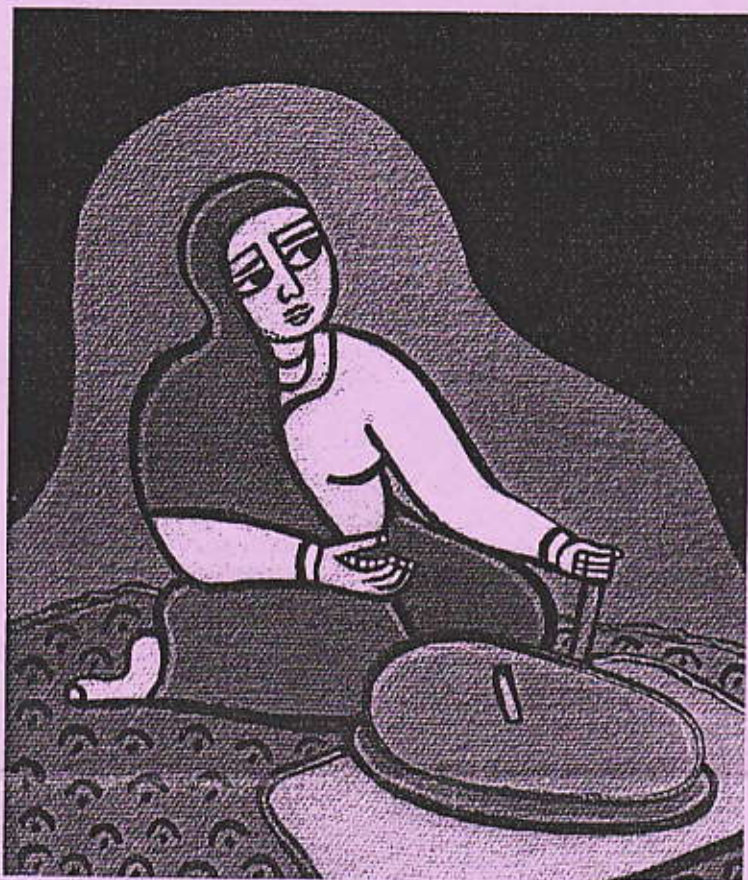


First Sunday of Advent



Blessing the Advent Wreath

God, giver of all light,
bless this Advent wreath,
sign of our waiting for your Son.
We long for your light.
Open our eyes,
that we may find your presence
in unexpected places.
Help us then become light for others
who wait in darkness
for the coming of Christ,
Light of the World.
May we see the light of beauty this week.
May we bring the light of praise
to our homes and neighborhoods.
May these candles remind us
to bring whatever light we can,
wherever we may be.
We ask this through the same Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, November 28, 2010 Light-deprived?

Today's Readings: Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44. How we long for light! Anyone who's struggled mentally with a problem at 3:00 AM knows how it can become easier to resolve at 9:00 AM. In summer we watch how a lake holds the light or how leaves filter it. During winter's shorter days, we nestle lights in Advent wreaths or Christmas trees. In all seasons we sing, "Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts, Shine in our darkness."

When Jesus tells us in today's Gospel to stay awake, he can't mean literally 24 hours a day. He must refer, then, to an inner alertness, an inner light, which allows us to see we are blessed to have *this* home, *this* family, *this* task. That alertness opens us to God's presence and the potential for

seeing good in every situation. How often do we waste time longing for different situations or better relatives? Cardinal John Henry Newman described the divine design: "All God's works are in place and season; they are all complete." Awareness of God's presence in each moment and encounter makes the difference between two women grinding meal or two men working in the field. One is aware and grateful, filled with light; one isn't. So, too, some lived unconscious and oblivious at Noah's time. Which will we be?

We're not supposed to live in fear, but in a golden light of awareness. Then we'll welcome the master when he comes, no matter in what surprising circumstances or unexpected people.

This Week at Home



Monday, November 29 Remembering Dorothy Day

The co-founder, with Peter Maurin, of the Catholic Worker movement died on this day in 1980 at 83. She often said, using a phrase of the author Dostoyevsky, that all her life she had been "haunted by God." Following Saint Thérèse of Lisieux's "little way," she did God's work in small, humble actions. Day opened many soup kitchens and houses of hospitality where the poor were treated like sisters and brothers in Christ. Today's readings: Isaiah 4:2-6; Matthew 8:5-11.

Tuesday, November 30 Feast of Saint Andrew, Apostle

Read the account of Jesus calling Andrew while he fished with his brother Peter in today's Gospel. Discuss what Jesus might have meant when he told them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people" (Matthew 4:19). Then celebrate any Andrews you know, phoning them or sending an e-mail. Today's readings: Romans 10:9-18; Matthew 4:18-22.

Wednesday, December 1 Ritualize the Waiting

It's tempting to rush into Christmas, but rewarding to savor Advent. Mark the waiting with an Advent calendar, which can be purchased or hand-made. Behind each of the 24 small doors is a picture or saying. Each day, another door is opened, a tangible way to prepare for Christmas. What other symbolic doors could we open in our lives during this season? Today's readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37.

Thursday, December 2 Martyrs of El Salvador

Locate El Salvador on a map. Here, in 1980, three Catholic sisters and one lay missionary were murdered: Maura Clarke,

Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan. They were serving the poor during a terrible time of civil warfare and violence. Jean, the youngest in the group, had a promising career ahead in the United States but chose to remain in danger. Two weeks before her death she wrote to a friend about why she stayed: "I almost could [leave] except for the children . . . Who would care for them? Whose heart would be so staunch as to favor the reasonable thing in a sea of their tears and loneliness? Not mine, dear friend, not mine." Today's Readings: Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27.

Friday, December 3 Memorial of Saint Francis Xavier

In the sixteenth century, long before jet planes or cruise ships, this saint traveled far from his country of Spain. One of the original six Jesuits, the religious order founded by Saint Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier was a missionary for 11 years. When he left Europe for a voyage to Goa, in India, he knew he would never see friends or family again. He went on to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Japan, and died as his ship approached China. What do you hear of these countries in today's news? Say a prayer for the peoples to whom Francis traveled so far, bringing Good News. Today's Readings: Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31.

Saturday, December 4 Supporting Pregnant Mothers

Nine months can seem like a long time for a mom who feels heavy, awkward, or sick. If you know someone who is pregnant, find a creative way to support her. Would she like a card, an invitation to lunch, a back rub, or a ride to a doctor's appointment? As you ease her waiting, you enhance your Advent season. Both times of waiting look forward to a special child. Today's Readings: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8.



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Keeping the Seasons
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