

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Prayer for Watchfulness

God our Father,
you are the potter who formed us.
You know that we wander from your ways.
Rouse us! Bring us to attention!
Make us watchful,
always scanning for your arrival.
Don't let us miss the ways
that you break into our lives,
in the small tasks and delights of everyday,

in service and sacrifice to family
and stranger,
in the safe return of an absent loved one.
Let us ever be alert
for the final return of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, November 30, 2014

Watch! Be Alert!

Today's Readings: Isaiah 63:16b–17, 19b; 64:2–7; Psalm 80: 2–3, 15–16, 18–19; 1 Corinthians 1:3–9; Mark 13:33–37. As we hear in the Gospel on this First Sunday of Advent, we cannot let ourselves sit back and be comfortable. As Christ tells his disciples, we need to “be watchful! Be alert!” As we prepare for Christ to come into our hearts at Christmas, we also ready ourselves for the Second Coming. We cannot be complacent. Our relationship with God and our relationships with others need to be in order. As Advent begins, we might examine how we can grow in our relationship to God and take care with our familial relationships.

Relationship is at the heart of the reading from Isaiah. Twice this reading calls God “father,” and throughout the

reading, it is apparent that humankind has damaged the relationship through sin. Finally, invoking the metaphor of clay and potter, it is noted that we are the work of God. God shapes us, but we need to allow him to work within us. During this Advent, we can consider how we rest in the potter's hands.

Finally, we see in the letter from St. Paul an acknowledgment that everything is from God. Paul is thankful to God for what he has bestowed on the Corinthians. The people in Corinth are filled with spiritual gifts. Paul assures them that God will keep them faithful as they await Christ. He will keep them faithful, we learn, because God is faithful. Yes, God is faithful, as a parent is faithful. Will we put our trust in this loving God this Advent?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 1, 2014

A Humble Encounter

Today's Gospel is the story of the Lord healing the centurion's paralyzed servant. Central to the text of the Gospel are the words "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed" (Matthew 8:8). The centurion was humbled at the thought of Jesus coming to his home. Do you approach the Sacrament of the Eucharist with humility, in awe that Christ will enter us? How do you prepare for Communion? Today's Readings: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4b, 4cd-5, 6-7, 8-9; Matthew 8:5-11.

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Peace in Our Time

In the 1983 US bishops' document *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, the bishops tell us "the human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world" (15). As we keep the days of Advent in the midst of a culture already celebrating Christmas, consider how we reflect God's presence. Do we take the time to rejoice "in the Holy Spirit," as stated in today's Gospel? Do we seek God's presence in each person encountered? Such awareness will help bring about the Kingdom of God. Today's Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24.

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Memorial of St. Francis Xavier, Priest

Francis Xavier ministered to the people of Malaysia and Japan and lived with the poor, sharing their food and rough accommodations. Inspired by his example, let us reflect on how we care for those in need. Would the homeless shelter in your community appreciate a meal or dessert your family provided for its residents? Or could your family donate to the food pantry or help out in a soup kitchen? Could such donations be a regular part of your family life? Today's Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; Matthew 15:29-37.

Thursday, December 4, 2014

St. John Damascene, Priest and Doctor

Consider the practice of *lectio divina*, or divine reading of Scripture. The practice consists of reading a biblical passage, meditating on a word or phrase from the passage, prayer flowing from the text, and contemplation. The reading and meditation can be repeated before moving to the prayer and contemplation. John Damascene defended the Church's regard for images. In a way, he practiced *lectio divina* by gazing upon images of Christ and the saints, icons that open us to contemplation, meditation, and prayer. Today's Readings: Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a; Matthew 7:21, 24-27.

Friday, December 5, 2014

Open Your Eyes

Today's Gospel tells of Jesus opening the eyes of two blind men. Advent is the time for us to open our eyes, to look around and wait for the light that shatters the short days and long nights for those of us who live in the Northern Hemisphere. Consider lighting a candle of the Advent wreath each night at the family dining table. Accompany the lighting with a reading from one of the Scripture passages of the day. Pray that the Scriptures will open your eyes this Advent. Today's Readings: Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; Matthew 9:27-31.

Saturday, December 6, 2014

Optional Memorial St. Nicholas, Bishop

Honoring St. Nicholas's concern for the poor, place coins in a baby bottle and share what you collect on January 22, 2015, (the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children) with an organization that advocates for unborn children. In today's Gospel, Jesus asks the master of the harvest to "send out laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38). The Gospel calls us to go out and proclaim the Good News. One way in which we do this is to uphold the dignity of each person. Today's Readings: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6; Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8.



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Keeping the Seasons

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