

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Bless Our Advent Time

Eternal God,
you are the architect of time.
As we prepare for your promised coming,
guide us to turn toward you.
Let us see your face and we shall be saved.
Bless our Advent wreath.
As we light each candle,

may the flame of Christ's coming
grow brighter
and enkindle our eagerness
to welcome him into our hearts, lives,
and world.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Come, Lord Jesus



Today's readings: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37. The season of Advent (from the Latin *adventus* meaning "coming") is a time to prepare for the coming of Christ. We anticipate three advents: the first is the historical coming of the Christ two thousand years ago; the second, the coming of Christ among us now; and the third advent, the hope of Christ coming again at the end of time.

Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. This year, it lands in early December, shortening our Advent season by an entire week. One of the best-known customs of the season is the Advent wreath. The circle of evergreens symbolizes the eternal character of God's time and Christ's reach into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles on the wreath mark our progress through the season. Bless your Advent wreath with the lighting of the first candle, and as a prayerful entrance into Advent invoke today's psalm response: "Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved" (Psalm 80:4).



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This Week at Home

Monday, December 4

Say the Word

Today's gospel relates one of the signs and wonders performed by Jesus. A Roman soldier, who knows a little about authority, says to Jesus: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter my house, but only say the word and I shall be healed." The soldier understands that Jesus' words carry divine power. Throughout Advent, we follow the soldier's example of faith by assuming a stance of humility and openness to the work of the Lord. *Today's readings: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:1-9; Matthew 8:5-11.*

Tuesday, December 5

The Shoot of Jesse

The Jesse tree is an Advent custom that helps us connect the festive practice of decorating Christmas trees to Jesus' biblical ancestors. Its name is derived from today's first reading, "A shoot shall come out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). Jesse, the father of King David, is often looked upon as the first person in the genealogy of Jesus. For your Jesse tree, start with a bare branch and hang a new ornament every day. These ornaments represent the individual figures from the Bible. They can be made from any material you choose. *Today's readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24.*

Wednesday, December 6

Nicholas, bishop of Myra, died around 342

Nicholas was the bishop of Myra (modern-day Turkey) in the fourth century. According to legend, he anonymously provided generous help to those in need. One story says he dropped bags of gold down the chimneys of poor families, widows, and orphans. Surprise family members with a stocking filled with gifts. Plan an anonymous gift for a person or agency in need this Advent. *Today's readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23; Matthew 15:29-37.*

Thursday, December 7

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, died 397

Ambrose served as the bishop of Milan during the fourth century. A brilliant theologian and doctor of the Church, Ambrose helped articulate the Christian faith through his writings. He is also remembered for a beautiful Advent carol, "O Come, Redeemer of the Earth." Create your own playlist of specifically Advent music and carols to keep your heart and mind firmly planted in the spirituality of preparation. *Today's readings: Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a; Matthew 7:21, 24-27.*

Friday, December 8

Saying yes to God

Today's Gospel highlights the faith and grace given to Mary, by which she said yes to God's plan for her life. Advent is a perfect time to reflect on the of Jesus being born into a human family... into each of our families.. from the mystery of the annunciation through the incarnation to the rearing of Jesus in faith. *Today's readings: Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Psalm 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38.*

Saturday, December 9

Juan Diego Cuāuhltlahtoāztin, died 1548

On December 9, 1531, Juan Diego had a vision of Mary in which she instructed him to tell his bishop that she desired a temple to be built on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. From this place, she would hear the anguish of all who live in the region and respond with love, compassion, and protection. Hesitant to accept Juan Diego's account of Mary's appearance, the bishop requested a sign. Mary sent Juan Diego to pick roses where only desert plants grew. She arranged the roses in Juan's cloak and sent him back to the bishop. When Juan opened his tilma before the bishop, he discovered an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe imprinted on it. This North American revelation of Mary is a key part of the season for Latino Christians. *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.*