

1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Patient Anticipation

God our Father,
fulfiller of promises,
you illuminate our way to justice.
Guide us to humbly and kindly
increase and abound in love for one other.
May our hearts be strengthened
as we look past the distractions of this season.

In this patient anticipation,
help us to be vigilant
so that we may be ready to respond
to the call you have placed in our hearts.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 1, 2024

Vigilance Requires Intentional Action



Today's readings: Jeremiah 33:14–16; Psalm 25:4–5, 8–9, 10, 14 (1b); 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2; Luke 21:25–28, 34–36. In the first reading, Jeremiah recalls the promise the Lord made to the Israelites regarding safety and security. Through his prophecy of restoration, Jeremiah calls the Israelites back to the Lord. Hearing this prophecy reminds us that comfort in the Lord is near!

At the beginning of the liturgical year, Advent encourages Christians to focus on keeping the Lord's "covenant and his decrees," as the psalm states. Much like the Israelites, we need to pray for prudence to recognize distractions in our daily lives. During this hectic season, we may feel pulled in

many directions, often away from God, as it is a time filled with much busyness and movement—or "the anxieties of daily life." Amid these distractions, we are to remember that vigilance requires intentional action. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells his disciples, "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy." If attention is not paid, a person could be caught by surprise on the day of redemption. Keeping the Lord's covenant and his decrees requires spiritual discipline.

As this season of anticipation begins, the Advent wreath is blessed and lighted. Let us dedicate ourselves to lifting our souls to the Lord as we light a new candle each week.



Illustration: the Advent O Antiphons (O Come, O Come Emmanuel)

This Week at Home

Monday, December 2

Healing words

The centurion who approaches Jesus as he enters Capernaum expresses faith in the restorative power of Jesus' word: "Only say the word and my servant will be healed." As a man of authority, used to having his words become actions he recognized the authority in Jesus. This week, consider how you might be like the centurion and faithfully ask for healing. Allow the Lord's words to provide comfort and flow over you so that you can go rejoicing. *Today's readings: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:1-9; Matthew 8:5-11.*

Tuesday, December 3

Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia, died 1552

Francis Xavier was a cofounder of the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. As the first Jesuit missionary, he spent much time traveling and living in foreign places to evangelize. His ministry required his learning new languages, being flexible with movement, and living in different cultures. How does Francis Xavier's witness as an example of faith invite how you might challenge yourself to leave your comfort zone to preach the Good News. *Today's readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24.*

Wednesday, December 4

Abundance

Today's Scriptures portray God's bountiful love for God's people. First, the reading from Isaiah proclaims that the Lord "will provide for all peoples." Then Matthew's gospel recounts how Jesus fed the crowd who had been with him for days with "nothing to eat." After Jesus gave thanks and broke the bread, thousands were offered food—and still there were leftovers! Reflect on the blessings in your life. Say a prayer in gratitude for the abundance—whatever that may be—with which the Lord has blessed you. *Today's readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23:1-6; Matthew 15:29-37.*

Thursday, December 5

Sturdy ground

The gospel reading today portrays the importance of both listening intently and intentionally responding to the Lord. Consider ways to listen and respond to God throughout the rest of this season. How can you "be like a wise person who built their house on rock"? What are some tangible ways in which you are being encouraged to act so that your faith stands on sturdy ground? *Today's readings: Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27; Matthew 7:21, 24-27.*

Friday, December 6

Nicholas, bishop of Myra, died around 342

It is easy to become consumed with shopping for gifts and preparing for many holiday parties as Christmas approaches, ultimately pushing aside our dedication to God. When losing focus on what matters, allow to echo within you today's psalm refrain: "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Recognizing this transformational prayer, celebrate St. Nicholas today with the gift of an act of service for someone. *Today's readings: Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; Matthew 9:27-31.*

Saturday, December 7

An abundant harvest

That Jesus' heart was moved with pity for the troubled and abandoned can comfort us today. Matthew's gospel portrays Jesus' ministering to those who seemed like "sheep without a shepherd" and delegating his disciples to do the same. The reading from Isaiah shows that the Lord gives what is needed, answering God's people "as soon as God hears" their cries. Let us find peace knowing that God is with us as we receive and, in turn, as we give. *Today's readings: Isaiah 30:19-26; Psalm 147:1-6; Matthew 9:35-10:8.*