

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Waiting

O God, you are the maker of heaven
and earth,
the potter who fashioned all of creation.
Come and rouse our hearts from despair
and fill us with the light of faith as we
await your return.
Grant us patient perseverance during
this period of waiting
so that, having been enriched by
Christ Jesus,
we may joyfully and faithfully live in
this world.
Keep us vigilant in our daily living.
Wipe away all darkness
so our hearts may be made holy
and pure.
Like our ancestors in faith, we cry out
to you to come and save us!
Filled with hope,
we trust that all creation will be made
new on the day of your return.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 3, 2017

Keep 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. Today's readings may not be what you expect as this season of hope and longing begins. Two general themes unfold during Advent: the first two Sundays invite the Church to reflect on the Second Coming of Christ, while the final two Sundays direct our attention more specifically to the Incarnation. Along with the readings, be attentive to the Collects, or Opening Prayers, during the next few weeks, to notice these themes.

The overarching theme for today is “Keep alert.” The First Reading, a communal lament (63:16b–17, 19) and a prayer (64:2–7), focuses our attention on a hurting world. When there is suffering, it is easy to complain or become

cynical and forget God's faithfulness. St. Paul is telling us that in Christ we have already received the gifts we need to remain faithful during this life, this in between time. This is important information as we look to the Gospel. Jesus is very clear that we do not know the day or time of the Second Coming. Like the servants whose master is away, we have been charged to continue preaching the Good News, to keep our “house” in good working order.

We must remain watchful so that at that final hour, we may be found ready to give all glory and honor to the living God. This week, as you prepare your Jesse tree, consider the ways our ancestors were watchful and remained faithful. What might help you remain vigilant?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 4

Peace

At the beginning of Advent, the Church invites us to ponder the Reign of God. The First Reading paints an image of God gathering and instructing the nations. God's instruction leads the nations to unity and peace. Our world continues to be divided so we must continue to pray for peace and strive to make known the Reign of God. Also, do you notice a familiar text in the Gospel? We say this prayer before receiving Holy Communion. At dinner, take some time to discuss this phrase and its relation to the Eucharistic table. *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 5

Jesus Revealer of the Father

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus rejoicing over what God has revealed to the disciples. To understand the reference the reader needs to read verse 17 of the chapter, which describes a battle between good and evil. Like the disciples, we must be watchful, work for justice, and fend off evil. Those who have seen Christ know the Father. Today, create a Jesse tree with your family and discuss Christ's role in salvation. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24.*

Wednesday, December 6

St. Nicholas

The message of the First Reading and Gospel helps us understand St. Nicholas' desire to serve the poor and needy. Jesus, whose love is overflowing, inspired Nicholas to give generously to others. Instead of seeking gifts today, read about St. Nicholas and decide how your family might share its resources with the poor. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; Matthew 15:29-37.*

Thursday, December 7

St. Ambrose

Advent invites us to look into our hearts to discern our willingness to listen and to respond to God's call. The readings today tell us that only the just will enter God's Kingdom and stand firm amidst adversity. Is your heart open to the Father's will? In what ways do you struggle to listen and respond to God? Take time today to journal and name ways you are living the Father's will. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1 and 8-9, 19-21, 2-27a; Matthew 7:21, 24-27.*

Friday, December 8

The Immaculate Conception

Today's solemnity celebrates God's grace working in Mary that kept her free of sin from the moment of her conception. The Gospel passage helps us understand that throughout her life she cooperates with God's grace. Confronted by the angel Gabriel, she puts aside her entire self and says yes. She is the New Eve, the mother of all the living. Unlike Eve in Genesis, Mary humbly and obediently accepts God's will and brings forth life in Jesus. After dinner, sing the Magnificat and discuss the powerful images. *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

Discipleship

Jesus, in today's Gospel, commissions the disciples to "cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons" as part of their mission to proclaim the Reign of God. In Baptism each of us was commissioned to live in such a way that our lives proclaim the Good News. What does it look like to "cure" the sick or "drive out" demons today? Jesus is calling us to go to the margins and proclaim God's Reign. Today, consider celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. *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.*

