

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



God's Justice

God of justice,
you surprise us with your choices
of the smallest nation to bless the world,
a shepherd boy to be their king,
and a baby born in a stable to be the
King of Kings.

Give us a heart like yours
that loves the least among us
and values them as the greatest.
Teach us your justice
that will always forgive
and bring forth life from death.
We make our prayer through Jesus,
the long-awaited Messiah,
the fulfillment of the promise from
all ages. Amen.

Sunday, December 2, 2018

A Season of Waiting

Today's Readings: Jeremiah 33:14–16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2; Luke 21:25–28, 34–36. Many good things require waiting and planning: a wedding celebration, the birth or adoption of a baby, running a marathon. For such events, we enter into a mode in which much attention is focused on the preparation, even while the obligations of our daily life continue.

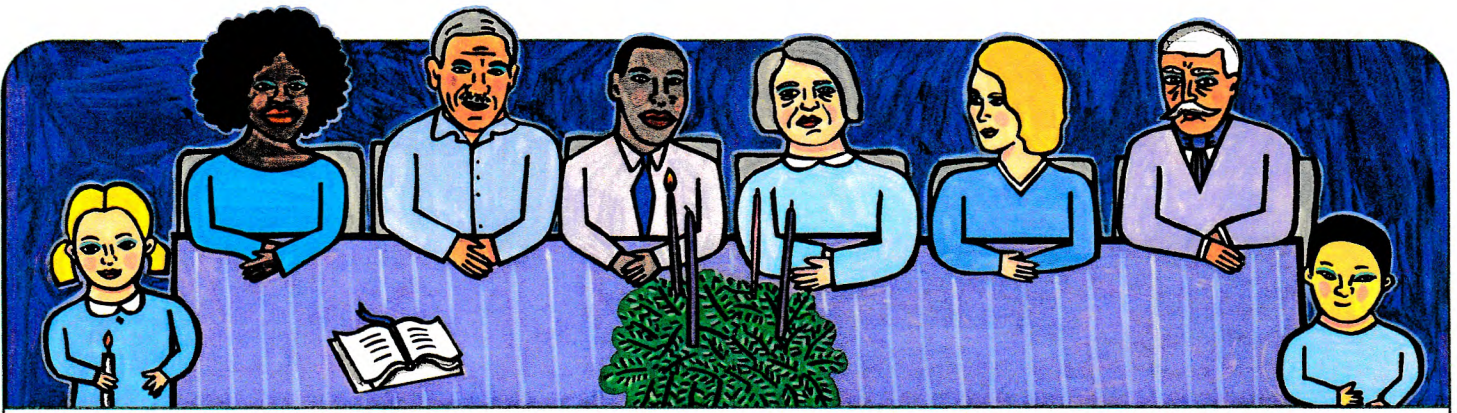
This kind of preparation is needed to have a good Advent. It may be hard to imagine even more preparation when already there are presents to be bought and wrapped, a tree and lights to be put up, cookies to be baked, and cards to be written.

Preparing for Advent is not hard work; it is a work of the heart. There are many ways to prepare our hearts—attending

daily Mass, reading and reflecting on each day's readings, praying Morning and Evening Prayer, praying the Rosary, and meditating in silence for fifteen minutes each day.

The work of the heart we choose keeps our eyes fixed on the miracle that in God's plan, he spoke his Word and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is the Word expressed in flesh and blood, to allow us to draw closer to the God of infinite mystery. Jesus gives his very flesh and blood to us—once in history on Calvary, and for all time in the Eucharist.

While we await his return, we have good reason to “stand erect and raise [our] heads,” as today's Gospel counsels. We cannot become too fatigued or too anxious to remember that “[our] redemption is at hand.”



Monday, December 3

St. Francis Xavier, Priest

Prophets know that God's saving work is not just for the Jewish people. Isaiah calls his countrymen to "walk in the light of the Lord," anticipating the day when "all nations shall stream toward [Jerusalem]." Jesus meets a Roman centurion whose faith amazes him compared to many "children of the kingdom." As Advent begins, we might ask ourselves whether we, who have had the benefit of hearing the Word of God and receiving sacraments, have weak or strong faith. *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 4

Blessed Are We

Isaiah speaks of a time when the earth will be filled with knowledge of the Lord, and there will be peace among nations and even animals. These events await the fulfillment of God's plan when Jesus returns in glory. Yet Jesus knows how blessed his disciples are to see him in the flesh and hear his words. When we take the Risen Christ into our body in the Eucharist and listen to the Word, we are blessed with a foretaste of the time when we will know him fully. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24.*

Wednesday, December 5

Making God Known

For the third day, we hear Isaiah describe a mountain where all will come to know God as he provides rich, plentiful food and destroys death. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus feeds more than four thousand people and heals all who are sick. Surely, God is making himself known in their midst! When we prepare food for others or tend them when they are sick, are we aware that we are making God known? *Today's Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; Matthew 15:29-37.*

Thursday, December 6

St. Nicholas

Advent is a good time to evaluate whether our religious practices are built on the rock-solid foundation of Jesus or a lack of trust. Isaiah says that peace will reign when we fully trust God. St. Nicholas, who remains a revered saint 1,800 years after he lived, is remembered for his generosity to the poor and the secrecy of his good deeds. He heard the words of Jesus and acted on them. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a; Matthew 7:21, 24-27.*

Friday, December 7

St. Ambrose

When Jesus heals two blind men, they tell everyone they know. In the fourth century, St. Ambrose was renowned for both his preaching and his arguments against heresy while bishop of Milan. People loved him best for his first act as bishop: selling all he had and giving to the poor. During this holy season we beg Christ to remove our blindness to our sins, open our lips to tell others about him, and open our hearts to care for the poor among us. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; Matthew 9:27-31.*

Saturday, December 8

Immaculate Conception

During Advent, while the whole Church waits with Mary, we ponder her special role in salvation history and celebrate that she, the perfect vessel who would give birth to the Savior, was conceived without sin. The angel who brought her the news called her "favored one." The Church echoed those words when, in 1854, it proclaimed as doctrine the Immaculate Conception. So widespread was this belief that eight years before the Vatican pronouncement, United States bishops had embraced Mary as America's patroness under the title of the Immaculate Conception. *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.*

