

### A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

November 27 - December 3

#### FIRST SUNDAY OF



#### Year A-Advent

This week marks the beginning of the new Church year, the season of Advent. By now, Christmas lights and decorations fill stores and neighborhoods, but before the Christmas season officially begins on December 24, the Church spends four weeks in Advent.

Advent means "arrival" or "coming." It heralds God's coming into the world through his Son, Jesus Christ. What our world, and each of us, needs most is the presence of God. From the beginning, humanity was created for fellowship with him. In Eden, Adam and Eve walked closely with God until sin disrupted that relationship, creating a deep separation. From that point forward, God began his work of redemption, culminating in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who came to rescue us from sin and death through his death and resurrection.

Curiously, Advent doesn't begin with the story of Jesus' birth but with the promise of his return. The Second Coming happens because Jesus first came, lived perfectly, died for our sins, rose from the grave, and ascended to heaven. The Church now lives between these two advents: the first that brought salvation and the second that will bring consummation.

This week's Gospel reading from Matthew 24 offers a dramatic picture of Christ's return. In Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he writes that great leaders "begin with the end in mind." The Church begins its year in the same way: by looking toward the end, when Christ will return in glory to end this age of sin, chaos, and death, and usher in the eternal age of life.

Jesus warns, "Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. If the owner of the house had known at what time the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and not let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

Between the advents, we are called to remain watchful, living faithfully in service to God and others, with eyes fixed on the hope of Christ's return. Watchfulness means more than awareness; it calls for an active, hopeful faith.

This week's Old Testament readings from Genesis 6–9 remind us of Noah's watchful righteousness. In a world where "every inclination of the human heart was only evil all the time," God found favor with Noah because of his faithfulness. Jesus says the time of his return will be "as it was in the days of Noah." Many will be too distracted and self-absorbed to notice God's arrival until he suddenly appears.

# FOR reflection

As you read and pray during this first week of Advent, ask God to ready your heart and sharpen your spiritual vision. The Apostle Paul captures this call in Romans 13: "The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."



# **SCRIPTURE**

#### READINGS FOR THE WEEK

**Thursday** Psalm

Psalm 122; Daniel 9:15-19; James 4:1-10

Friday

Psalm 122; Genesis 6:1-10; Hebrews 11:1-7

Saturday

Psalm 122; Genesis 6:11-22; Matthew 24:1-22

**Sunday** 

Psalm 122; Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

**Monday** 

Psalm 124; Genesis 8:1-19; Romans 6:1-11

**Tuesday** 

Psalm 124; Genesis 9:1-17; Hebrews 11:32-40

Wednesday

Psalm 124; Isaiah 54:1-10; Matthew 24:23-35

### Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

# The Morning Liturgy

### **Opening Scripture**

Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

Mark 13:35, 36

#### Opening Prayer (based on Psalm 51)

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

Amen.

**Scripture Reading** (read Psalm and Gospel text here)

Period of Silence

Confessing Our Faith (Apostles' Creed)

The Lord's Prayer

#### **The Collect** (Proper 29)

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

## A Midday Prayer

Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your mercies' sake. *Amen*.

# An Early Evening Prayer

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love.

Amen.

# A Bedtime Confession and Prayer

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name.

Amen.

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let Your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let Your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

