

December 3, 2023

First Sunday of Advent

Is 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7

1 Cor 1:3-9

Mk 13:33-37

GROW | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

In a nineteenth-century sermon, St. John Henry Newman wrote of today's Gospel: "[Jesus] mercifully whispers into our ears ... not to share in the general unbelief [around us], not to be carried away by the world but to 'beware, keep alert' and look out for his coming." I love the thought that Jesus is "mercifully whispering" to us. Welcome to Advent! We know that Advent is a time of anticipation and preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ, but today's readings also speak to me of training ourselves to be alert for God's presence in the small, everyday moments of our lives. In his Letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes that "[we] are not lacking in any spiritual gift" as we await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are gifted with his grace. Our loving God bestows countless graces on us each day, and with the help of the Holy Spirit we can seek ways to be more aware of these graces. Yes, we can be more "alert" to them, but can also be thankful for these small moments of God's presence with us.

GO | PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Advent is a season of joyful hope. "I hope I can get my Christmas shopping done in time ... I hope I have time to get my house decorated this weekend." We all have "hopes and dreams" for this time of year, and, God-willing we will be blessed with a truly festive and joyous holiday season with our families. For Catholics, though, this season of "joyful hope" is one that has a much deeper meaning. We long for the return of Christ and our eternal union with him with a hope that is built on the promises of Jesus in the Scriptures. Our hope is not passive, but active. We know that God is always there for us, comforting us in bad times and rejoicing with us in times of happiness. Let us give thanks for our Triune God who desires to be in relationship with us enough that he sent his Son to take on our humanity. And let us silence any noise in our hearts so as to hear Jesus' merciful whisper of encouragement to be on the watch for his coming.

SING

*People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way.*