

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Sacred Clay

God our Father,
you are the faithful potter.
You never abandon the work of your hands.
When evil shatters us,
take us into your hands again.
Pick up the broken pieces of our lives.
Smooth our jagged edges.
Seal the fractures that weaken us.

As you fashion and refashion us,
mold us into people who are steady
and strong.
Fill us with your many spiritual gifts.
Make us unbreakable vessels of holiness
that will gleam forever in the light
of your kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, November 29, 2020

Prepared by God



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. Initially, our First Reading may feel more suited to Lent than Advent. The prophet declares that God's people have become so sinful they are like dirty rags. They are withered, fallen leaves that are carried away by evil. The prophet also notes, however, that the people are the work of God's hands. They are God's children. He cries out for God to intervene, to rescue the people from their sin.

Only God can deliver people from evil, but we nonetheless have a role in withstanding it. The fullness of God's kingdom began with the birth of Christ, but we await its completion. As we wait for Christ's return, we, like the ser-

vants in the Gospel passage, have work to do. We must resist sin and pursue holiness with unfailing, tireless devotion. Every moment of our lives is an opportunity to show Christ that we are not only watching for his return, we are eagerly awaiting it. Our words and actions show Christ that we desire the kingdom he brings.

Our heavenly Father comes to our aid, as the ancient prophet cried out for him to do. God has given us countless spiritual gifts to resist sin and to keep us steadfast until his Son's return. As we bless our Advent wreaths today, we ask God to make them signs of his blessings upon us and reminders of the light we must bear within us until Christ vanquishes the darkness forever.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, November 30 St. Andrew, Apostle

In Jesus' day, the sea represented death because of the perils people faced on the water. When Jesus calls the fishermen to follow him, he says that just as they drew fish out of the sea, so will they draw people out of suffering and death. After Andrew spends time learning from his new master, he will set forth to catch people in the net of God's salvation. He will preach the good news so that others will call upon the name of the Lord. Learn more from the Lord by joining a Bible study this Advent. *Today's Readings: Romans 10:9–18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11; Matthew 4:18–22.*

Tuesday, December 1 God's Peace

God's kingdom comes through a Spirit-filled ruler who puts God's will above all else. As this leader purges the land of self-interest and violence, all creation becomes part of the peace he brings, and people at last understand the salvation God offers. Such salvation is received by the childlike, by those who know that only God can bring the justice and peace for which we long. Make a list of places that are especially in need of God's peace. Pray for the people who live there. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 11:1–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 12–13, 17; Luke 10:21–24.*

Wednesday, December 2 The Hand of the Lord

The crowds that follow Jesus are looking to him to save them. He showed God's glory as he healed them. Jesus not only heals people, he attends to other needs, too. He wipes away tears of pain and anguish. He provides food and gives people rest. As Jesus fulfills Isaiah's prophecy, the people see God's love for them. They rejoice at God's care and protection. Today extend a caring hand toward someone who is sick and suffering. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 25:6–10a; Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6; Matthew 15:29–37.*

Thursday, December 3 St. Francis Xavier, Missionary

God assures us that he is our rock, our protector, the firm foundation beneath our feet. No work that we do, no undertaking, will succeed unless God supports it. Francis Xavier understood this well: he became a missionary first in India, then in Japan, where he taught people about Christ and built up new communities of faith. Pray for missionaries today, especially those who work in Asia. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 26:1–6; Psalm 118:1 and 8–9, 19–21, 25–27a; Matthew 7:21, 24–27.*

Friday, December 4 With New Eyes

These readings tell how God banishes evil—the evil of injustice, fear, shame, ignorance, and physical impairments, like blindness. God's light and healing reach into every part of our world and every part of our lives. Too often we don't see God's saving presence. Like the blind men in the Gospel passage, we must seek God and call out to him so that we will see his presence with new eyes. How do your Advent and Christmas decorations help you see God's presence? *Today's Readings: Isaiah 29:17–24; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13–14; Matthew 9:27–31.*

Saturday, December 5 Harvests

God promises to manifest himself to his people, to guide them, and to bind up their wounds. God will also provide so much water and food that even the animals enjoy abundant harvests. The real harvest, though, is us. God cultivates and gathers his people into his kingdom. Sketch images or jot down words and phrases from today's readings that especially move you. Bring your images and insights into a time of silent prayer. *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.*

