

NOVEMBER 28, 2021

First Sunday of Advent

Jer 33:14-16

1 Thes 3:12-4:2

Lk 21:25-28,34-36

GROW: As the days grow shorter and darker, I am especially ready for Advent wreaths and nativity sets; sparkling lights and singing angels. More than ever, I eagerly anticipate the joyful celebration of Christ's birth. But today's readings for the first Sunday of Advent point us to the end of time, when Jesus returns in glory. Wait a minute, what? I don't want to think about the dismay and fright that Jesus foretells in the Gospel, I want to think about shepherds and holy nights. We really can't do one without the other, however, and the underlying message of the readings is one of hope and reassurance: Our God keeps his promises. He is faithful to the covenants he makes. He loves us so much; he offers us new beginnings. Our God became one of us, died to save us, and will give us the strength to be ready to greet him when he comes again. "Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand," Jesus says. Pray that our preparation for Christ's birth will make us all the more ready for his return

GO: We are a society and culture that focuses a lot on the outward signs of preparation, and there is a lot of pressure to make it all perfect. Pinterest boards, social media groups, magazine photos, clothing catalogs: all show perfectly dressed people with perfectly adorable dogs standing in front of exquisitely perfect Christmas trees, on perfectly unblemished snow. But perfection in the exterior is not the Christian goal. Our interior preparation – how we make ourselves ready for Christ now, and at the end of time – is the focus of Advent. It is an opportunity for repentance, and a joyful new beginning in our relationship with God. It is a time to recommit ourselves to the covenant he made with us, and the psalm and the second reading offer assistance in doing so. Make time each day to dive in and explore what Scripture reveals about "conducting yourselves to please God."

PRAY: Pray the psalm from the first Sunday of Advent each morning. Ask God to open your heart to ways you can be more just. He will teach you, guide you and strengthen your heart so that you can stand upright to face whatever challenges come your way.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior,
and for you I wait all the day.