Wellspring
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November 29, 2026

Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we begin the season of Advent, a time of joyful, faith-filled and patient waiting. We are invited to consider the weeks of preparation for Christmas as an opportunity for nurturing a spirituality of waiting in expectation - not a passive, inactive, idle and unimaginative presence in space and time - but a dynamic, active and positively imaginative waiting - a spiritual posture of waiting and longing for Christ, praying and preparing for his ultimate appearance among us - a spirituality of hope, simple and pure optimism about us and the world around us.

The season of Advent reminds us that our faith in God, our hope in His promises and our love for Him and each other are the greatest wealth that we possess. It reminds us that we are a privileged people, a people blessed and graced by God's unconditional love revealed in Jesus; that God has not abandoned the world; that he continues to break into our history; that the presence of or even the height of evil must not discourage us. The apparent brokenness and disintegration of the world will be healed. God continues to bring about healing, integrity and wholeness. May the season of Advent and the good news it proclaims challenge us to live lives that are faithful, blameless, loving, and joyful during these difficult and troublesome times.

Although Advent is a joyful season, it often brings small disappointments and trials such as a burned batch of cookies, or a nasty snowstorm, or an obnoxiously long line at the post office, or a delayed flight or an unexpected trip to the doctor's office. In all these trials, we are challenged to see opportunities to be watchful, to be alert and to live noble and virtuous lives. Patiently bearing with the inconveniences and trials will prepare us well for the coming of Christ.

Every year, the season of Advent begins with the call to repent and to believe, to watch and to pray and to prepare the way of the Lord for He comes! This year, we hear a special call, a very encouraging and inspiring call from the Scripture readings of the first Sunday of Advent. This call is to come to God with a prayer in our hearts for a renewal and restoration of our life with confidence in his steadfast and unfailing love, with gratitude for the many spiritual gifts that God has given us and with a deep desire to live blameless, loving, and faithful lives.

The post-exilic prophet whom we know as Trito-Isaiah (or third Isaiah) expresses the urgent longings and hopes of his people who had just returned to their homeland from hard times in Exile (First Reading, Isaiah 63:16-19; 64:2-7). He also admits the sin and guilt of his people wandering aimlessly without God. The Prophet prayed to God for his "loving kindness" which is "steadfast", enduring, everlasting, unfailing and ever faithful. It was this "steadfast loving

kindness" that redeemed them from their plight in Babylon. Our prophet prayed again to God to remember, return, redeem and renew his people.

The responsorial Palm is a confident and inspiring prayer to God, the shepherd of Israel for the renewal and restoration of Israel. Let us make it our prayer today, "Shepherd of Israel and our Good Shepherd, stir up your might; restore us; let your face shine on us!!" We are now living through difficult and trying times with the war in Iran, Israel, and Ukraine, the cost of essential commodities, etc. We need to be renewed in faith and grounded in Christ.

Saint Paul advises us, as he did the Corinthians, to be grateful for the spiritual gifts that God has given us and to make an effort to live blameless lives during this season of Advent (second reading). Jesus calls us today, as he did his followers, to be vigilant like the gatekeeper awaiting the master's return (todays' Gospel reading). Jesus reminds us that no one knows the day or the hour when God would break into our history. So we must always be attentive, vigilant and prepared and patiently and faithfully waiting for the Lord's coming. Jesus calls us, as he did his disciples, to be faithful even in the master's absence, even when no one is watching.

Faithful and patient waiting must characterize all our advent days and nights. It has never been easy to be patient and waiting, but it is probably harder now than at any time in history. In a world where messages and information can be sent across the world instantly, everything is available with only a few clicks of the mouse or an 800 number. Fortunately, patience is a virtue that can be cultivated and nurtured over time. It is one of the virtues that call us to try and try again…..seven times seventy times! Patience is definitely a difficult virtue to nurture.

Have you ever watched a spider? The spider will spend many hours, in earnest effort, spinning a web. As the spider spins the web, the key factor will become patience. Many hours after the web is completed, the spider waits and waits. The spider must be very still and quiet. The spider has a plan, but the plan can never develop without patience. As the spider waits, one day the spider will feel the web moving, the food has come suddenly. But there was nothing sudden about it. It was patience released and rewarded.

St. Francis De Sales advises us….. "Be patient with everyone but especially with yourself; I mean that you should not be troubled about your imperfections and that you should always have courage to pick yourself up afterwards."

I encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and reflect on how your day has been and pray, "Lord, teach us to be patient, as you are with us, during these difficult, trying, uncertain and unsettling times."

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of todays' mass….

First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2026

Advent invites us to a commitment to vigilance,
looking beyond ourselves, expanding our mind and heart,
to open ourselves up to the needs of people, of brothers and sisters,
and to the desire for a new world.
(Pope Francis)

Collect

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

Trusting in the provident care of a loving God will enable us
to meet the heartaches and challenges of our life
with confidence, peace and serenity.

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7

In this excerpt, our post-exilic prophet whom we know as Trito-Isaiah or third Isaiah expresses the urgent longings and hopes of his people who had just returned to their homeland from hard times in Exile. He also admits the sin and guilt of his people wandering aimlessly without God. In the midst of admission of guilt and expression of hope is a profound prayer calling on God as Father and as the "potter" who has fashioned human beings with tenderness and loving care. The Prophet prayed to God for his "loving kindness" which is "steadfast", enduring, everlasting

and ever faithful. It was this "steadfast loving kindness" that redeemed them from their plight in Babylon. Our prophet prayed again to God to remember, return, redeem and renew his people.

Let this prayer of the prophet become ours during the season of Advent: Lord, remember, return, redeem and renew your people.

Psalm 80

This Psalm begins with "Joseph" praying to the shepherd of Israel. "Joseph" here refers to the northern tribes, taken into exile by the Assyrians, of which Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh are mentioned in the second verse of the Psalm. So it is a group of poor exiles from the north who are represented in prayer in this Psalm. Remember, exile began about 721 years before Christ. Psalm 80:1-3 is their prayer to God whom they knew as the "Shepherd of Israel", just as David did (Psalm 23).

These exiles are making a bold, but trusting and prayerful response to their experience. Moving and powerful words are used by the Psalmist – Stir up thy might; Restore us; let your face shine!! Then they tell their Shepherd God how heartbroken they are: how long are you going to treat us this way, giving us tears, the scorn of neighbors and the laughter of the enemies for food and drink?!!! Restore us God, they prayed.

We are using only the second part of the Psalm in the Liturgy today (80:8-19). This is the parable of the Vineyard. It is a theological interpretation of the exile, in parable. The parable also alludes to the fact that what is described has happened again and again in history. This part of the Psalm begins with the remembrance of God's redemptive acts at Exodus as the basis of all other acts of God in behalf of His people.

Great Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea had described God as the Vinedresser and Israel as his favorite vineyard. Jesus spoke of himself as the vine and His farther as the Vinedresser. The parable tells the story of the vine as it grew and developed. Then it describes the destruction of the vineyard by foreign armies (12-13) and prays for restoration.

This is a beautiful and inspiring Psalm, rich in meaning and carrying within it theology, salvation history and spirituality. Pray the whole Psalm when you have chance.

Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock;
you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth
before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.
Awaken your might; come and save us.

I Corinthians 1:3-9

This excerpt is an expression of profound gratitude. Paul expresses gratitude to God for the gift of Grace which God had given to the Corinthians in Christ Jesus. The reason for this, Paul says, is that in Christ they have been "enriched" with every form of speech and knowledge. This means that what Paul assured the Corinthians about what Christ would do for them has come true. The promise is fulfilled. The hope is realized. Therefore, Paul says, "there is no spiritual gift" lacking while waiting "for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". This calls forth an added responsibility to live "blameless" lives relying on God who has called us to fellowship in Christ.

Be grateful for the spiritual gift that God has given you. Make an effort to live blameless lives during this season of Advent.

Mark 13:33-37

Be watchful! Be alert! Be vigilant like the gatekeeper awaiting the master's return: "Watch!" Jesus taught the disciples to be watchful, alert and awake…to be prepared. He said to them that no one knew the day or the hour when God would break into their history. He added: "I say this to all". This excerpt from the Gospel of Mark calls us, all of us, not just those who were listening to Jesus or the readers of Mark in his day. All believers are urged to wait patiently and vigilantly for the Lord's coming, not knowing time or space or situation, but joyfully waiting with great expectation.

So be prepared. Be alert! Stay awake!

Waiting in expectation is not a passive, inactive, idle and unimaginative presence in time and space. It is dynamic, active and positively imaginative waiting. It is like the servants being placed "in charge, each with his own work" or like the gatekeeper being "on the watch". As Paul says in the reading above (second reading) while waiting, we must live "blameless" lives relying on God who has called us to fellowship in Christ. And as Trito-Isaiah says (first reading), acknowledge the sin and guilt and turn to God whose "steadfast, loving kindness" is always available, ever present and always blessing. To be waiting means being faithful to who and what you are and to the responsibilities that come forth from your call.

Jesus called them to be faithful even in the master's absence, even when no one is watching. Faithfulness is an enduring quality of a person and not just doing duties and fulfilling obligations.

Saint of the day, November 29 - Saint Saturnin of Toulouse and 389 other saints are remembered this day.

Saint Saturnin of Toulouse was one of the seven "Apostles to the Gauls" sent out, probably by Pope Fabian (236 – 250), after the persecutions under Emperor Decius. He was the first Bishop of Tolosa (Toulouse). Legends place Saturninus in the 1st century as one of the 72 disciples of Christ and placed him at the Last Supper. Legends also state that St. Peter consecrated him as a bishop.

One of the legends tells us that Saturninus had to pass before the capital of Toulouse, where there was an altar. The pagan priests ascribed the silence of their oracles to the frequent presence of Saturninus. One day they seized him and, on his refusal to sacrifice to the images, they condemned him to be tied by the feet to a bull which dragged him about the town and the limbs and blood were scattered on every side, till the rope broke.

Two devout women laid the sacred remains on a bier, and hid them in a deep ditch, to secure them from any further insult, where they lay in "wooden coffin" till the reign of Constantine the Great. Then Hilary, bishop of Toulouse, built a small chapel over this site. The martyrdom of this saint probably happened during the reign of Valerian, in 257.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Advent is a season of Hope!
Be a channel of hope for someone today!

