

Wellspring
Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we begin the season of Advent. Celebrating the Season of Advent every year has been one of the most joyful traditions of all Christian communities. Signs of joy are all around us – colorful decorations and lights, smell of pastries, music in the air, people busying themselves searching for gifts and many other delightful signs are around us. There is goodness and love behind the bright lights, the colorful boxes, and the rush of shoppers bringing home their treasures.... something precious that holds all the excitements together.

The gift of God in this season is His son Jesus, who came bringing light to the world, forgiveness of sins, healing of brokenness and conversion of life through his death and resurrection. This gift is an enduring, everlasting and ever-present gift. The gifts that we give one another wear out. Remember the number of gifts that you received last year or any other year. Remember opening those gifts and the joy that came because someone loved and cared to show their love. You kept opening those gifts. There was always the last gift and no more to open.

The gifts stopped with what you could play with, or wear, or eat or hang on the wall or whatever.....all you could hang on to was the joy of knowing that someone loved and cared to show that love. The gifts that came beautifully wrapped may or may not be there anymore. But the love shared lingers. It is up to us now to let this lingering love grow and become more personal and intense. **Let all the gifts we give and receive during this season become powerful signs of our love for God and one another.**

Advent is a time of waiting, of eager longing for the Messiah, for the one who can heal us, save us, make us whole. In waiting , we must await God coming at His time, in His season, in His way. We must wait in silence, in solitude, in prayer. Dynamic waiting, positive thinking, optimistic living, hope-filled anticipation, and joyful and faith-filled presence are to characterize all our Advent days and nights because we wait for Jesus, the incarnation of God's steadfast, unconditional, everlasting, and ever faithful love.

This year, we follow Cycle "C" of the liturgical calendar. Our Scripture readings of the first Sunday of Advent call us to "be attentive and watchful," "Pray constantly for strength," and live "loving and blameless" lives.

In the first Scripture reading of today's mass (Jeremiah 33:14-16), we listen to Jeremiah reminding his people of God's promise to raise a "just shoot" in the line of David who would establish justice and peace and restore the fortunes and future of Israel. Israel had lost hope as their cities were destroyed and the people were being sent into exile. Jeremiah offered them hope. He reminded them of the promise of God to restore the fortunes and future of Israel. He called them to wait with joyful expectation for God to break in, in His time and not give in to negative and pessimistic voices.

In the second reading (I Thessalonians 3:12-4:2), we hear Saint Paul encouraging the Thessalonians to be prepared and ready to meet the Lord when he comes by living "lovingly and blamelessly". Paul praised them for their sincerity of efforts in this regard and encouraged them to "make still greater progress." The Gospel reading of today's mass (Luke 21:25-28; 34-36). The twenty verses that precede this excerpt (Luke 21:5-25), Luke describes the prophecies of Jesus regarding the fall of Jerusalem and the terrible experience that follow. When Luke wrote his Gospel, the prediction of Jesus had come true! The temple was gone! Titus and his troops had conquered Jerusalem and leveled the temple in the year 70 AD. The harsh realities that Jesus predicted did come true and believers faced them with courage.

Luke tells us how Jesus encouraged the disciples to "stand up straight and raise your heads for your ransom is near at hand." He called them to remember his teachings, trust his word, and not to give over to apocalyptic anxiety. He warned them about doomsday prophets, "many will come in my name...do not follow them..." He encourages us today, just as he did his followers, not to worry about fearful omens or the threat of persecution. Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized that suffering persecution for the sake of the Kingdom and for the cause of justice was an integral part of being a disciple.

It is good for us to be attentive to the warning Jesus gave to his disciples "to trust his word and not to give over to apocalyptic anxiety." Our faith today is being tested. We need to stand our ground and be deeply rooted in our faith and spiritual tradition. Paul encourages us to live "loving and blameless" lives and Jesus calls us to, "stand up straight and raise your heads..." Our faith must be true, our witness must be authentic and continuous, our prayer must be intense and unceasing, our service must be generous and practical, our hope must be our strength, our love must be forgiving, gracious and benevolent!

Let us take a few moments each day of this week to be still and reflect on how our day has been and how we have responded to the Advent call to "be attentive and watchful," to "Pray constantly for strength," and to live "loving and blameless" lives.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of today's mass....

First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2024

**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.

**Forbearance is bearing with your own imperfections
and going forward with courage.**

Jeremiah 33:14-16

This prophesy of Jeremiah may have been occasioned by the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and the subsequent exile of the people. Israel had lost hope as their cities were destroyed and the people were being sent into exile. Jeremiah offered them hope. He reminded them of the promise of God to restore the fortunes and future of Israel. God had promised to raise a “just shoot” in the line of David. This “just shoot” would establish justice and peace and restore Israel and Judah. We know today that Jesus is this “just shoot” in the line

of David. He calls us to live a life of justice and peace which are integral parts of the reign of God.

Pray Psalm 25

This is an acrostic (alphabetic) Psalm – each single verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. Read the Psalm carefully and see how the Psalmist speaks of God as “the way, the truth and the life” and asks God to teach him His “way, truth and life”– Jesus will, years later, speak of himself as the way, the truth, and the life. This Psalm carries for us the following insights: Mistakes of the past can weigh heavily and burden my spirit. People can bring me shame, disgrace, and dishonor. But I desire God’s way and His way is a way of compassion and mercy. I know God’s way can guide me rightly and bring me peace and make me whole. I must accept God’s way, God’s saving rule, God’s wisdom, with reverence. In God’s way, I find forgiveness, grace, and peace. In God, I find a firm, guiding hand, a warm, loving friend, a strong companion on my journey. God shows the way and I follow. I seek to know and embrace God’s truth, God’s life and God’s mercy.

**Make known to me your ways, LORD;
teach me your paths.
Guide me by your fidelity and teach me,
for you are God my savior,
for you I wait all the day long.**

I Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Paul believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. So, he encouraged the Thessalonians to be prepared and be ready to meet him. The way to prepare was to “live lovingly and blamelessly”. He praised them for their sincerity of efforts in this regard and encouraged them to “make still greater progress”. Advent is a time when we are specially reminded of living “lovingly and blamelessly”.

Luke 21:25-28; 34-36

In Luke 21:5-25 which precedes this excerpt, Luke describes the prophecies of Jesus regarding the fall of Jerusalem and the terrible experience that follow. They admired the beauty and glory of their temple - gazed at it with amazement! They thought they were privileged to be in the presence of a beautiful and enduring reality, the construction of which took over 80 years. Besides its obvious beauty, the fact that the temple was revered as God’s dwelling place on earth made it a permanent structure in Jewish life and spirituality. So, they were shocked at the prediction Jesus made! Even angry! When Luke wrote his Gospel, the prediction of Jesus had come true! The temple was gone! Titus and his troops had conquered Jerusalem and leveled the temple in 70 C.E.

But God had not gone from there, nor was he gone from the hearts of the believers! What Jesus predicted did come true and believers faced them with courage.

Luke tells us how Jesus encouraged the disciples to accept these hardships as opportunities to bear witness to him and to the good news of salvation. He says: “stand up straight and raise your heads for your ransom is near at hand” - remember his teachings, trust his word, and not give over to apocalyptic anxiety. He warned them about doomsday prophets and encouraged them not to worry about fearful omens and not give in to the dread of suffering that could come as a result of following him.

Our faith today is being tested. We need to stand our ground - be deeply rooted in our faith tradition. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to live “loving and blameless” lives. This is what Jesus teaches us today, “stand up straight and raise your heads...” Our faith must be true, our witness must be authentic and continuous, our prayer must be intense and unceasing, our service must be generous and practical, our hope must be our strength, our love must be forgiving and gracious and benevolent.....

Jesus had talked about the “Day of the Lord” and the terrible events that surround that day. He talked about what he himself had to face and what his disciples eventually would face. Hearing all this, the disciples wanted to know what they should do and what signs they should be looking for. Jesus used familiar imageries of sun, moon, stars, gathering of clouds, budding fig tree, etc. to describe the reality of God breaking into history. Jesus called them to recognize the coming of God in all happenings.

Jesus continued to call his disciples to be alert and awake and to stand strong. He told them about the difficulties ahead. Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized that the suffering of persecution for the sake of the Kingdom and for the cause of justice was an integral part of being a disciple. The “Day of the Lord” will come. No one knew the time or the day or the hour. God will break in at the least expected moment, through least expected events, people, and situations. So, it is urgent to stay awake, alert, and prepared.

Jesus said to them, and he says to us today, “Pray constantly for strength...”

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your

truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, December 1 - Blessed Charles de Foucauld and 20 other saints are remembered this day.

Charles de Foucauld (Brother Charles of Jesus) was born in Strasbourg, France on September 15, 1858. Orphaned at the age of six, he and his sister Marie were raised by their grandfather in whose footsteps he followed by taking up a military career. He lost his faith as an adolescent. His taste for easy living was well known to all and yet he showed that he could be strong willed and constant in difficult situations. He undertook a risky exploration of Morocco. Seeing the way Muslims expressed their faith questioned him and he began repeating, "My God, if you exist, let me come to know you."

On his return to France, the warm, respectful welcome he received from his deeply Christian family made him continue his search. Under the guidance of Fr. Huvelin he rediscovered God in October 1886. He was then 28 years old. He said, "As soon as I believed in God, I understood that I could not do otherwise than to live for him alone."

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land revealed his vocation to him: to follow Jesus in his life at Nazareth. He spent 7 years as a Trappist, first in France and then at Akbès in Syria. Later he began to lead a life of prayer and adoration, alone, near a convent of Poor Clares in Nazareth.

Ordained a priest at 43 (1901) he left for the Sahara, living at first in Beni Abbès and later at Tamanrasset among the Tuaregs of the Hoggar. He wanted to be among those who were, "the furthest removed, the most abandoned." He wanted all who drew close to him to find in him a brother, "a universal brother." In a great respect for the culture and faith of those among whom he lived, his desire was to "shout the Gospel with his life". "I would like to be sufficiently good that people would say, "If such is the servant, what must the Master be like?" On the evening of December 1, 1916, he was killed by a band of marauders who had encircled his house.

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(Pope Francis)**

