

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Prepare the Way

Almighty and ever-living God,
you are the fount of all holiness,
the source of our salvation.
Through the many gifts you bestow on us,
you reveal your majesty and splendor.
For the times we ignore these gifts
and the gifts of your presence and love,
grant us forgiveness, Lord.
When our hearts are troubled
and we turn away from you,
smooth the paths made rough by sin and
straighten our winding ways.
Give us ears to hear the prophet's cry to
repent and courage to live a life worthy
of your kingdom.
Help us to live as did St. Paul, a prisoner
of Christ,
who with a heart filled with joy
prepared the people for your coming.
God, grant us your salvation and peace;
help us to be pure and blameless in the
presence of your Son, Jesus,
so that we might be ready to welcome him
when he comes again in glory.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 6, 2015

Repentance



Today's Readings: Baruch 5:1–9; Psalm 126:1–2, 2–3, 4–5, 6; Philippians 1:4–6, 8–11; Luke 3:1–6. This week's First Reading and Gospel illuminate how blessed the final day will be for those who follow Christ. John the Baptist's message in the Gospel is clear that followers need to repent. When we hear the word *repentance*, we often think of the Rite of Penance, but repentance is much more than confessing sins. The repentance that John preaches invites us to shed selfish desires and mend broken relationships. It invites us to die to ourselves so that the love of Christ may transform our hearts. God's love is revealed in our daily activities. We must be alert to our conduct and be generous as we interact with our family, coworkers, and neighbors.

Our repentance is met with God's mercy, who has saved us and brings us home just like those who had been held captive in Babylon. When we empty ourselves, we can allow God to direct our hearts. The change that will come from that will be something to celebrate.

The psalmist proclaims, "The Lord has done great things for us, we are filled with joy." Israel remembered and rejoiced at God's saving action. How often do we celebrate God's saving deeds? As Pope Francis states in *The Joy of the Gospel*, we can rejoice in the places in our lives where God has saved and healed us. "Time and again he bears us on his shoulders" (3).



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 7, 2015 Memorial of St. Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Continuing with the Advent theme, the First Reading describes Israel's liberation, which includes opening the eyes of the blind and unstopping the ears of the deaf. This message of hope clearly states that God saves the oppressed. The Gospel helps us understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. In this story, he heals the lame and forgives sins, showing God's incredible mercy. As we celebrate Ambrose, who preached this Good News, let us be mindful of all the oppressed who need hope and liberation. *Today's Readings:* Isaiah 35:1–10; Psalm 85:9ab and 10, 11–12, 13–14; Luke 5:17–26.

Tuesday, December 8, 2015 Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Today's solemnity celebrates God's grace working in Mary that kept her free of sin from the first moment of her conception. We learn from the Gospel that Mary was open to God's word and direction. As our mother, she models for us the way we are to respond to the "annunciations" that occur in our lives. When have you responded freely to God's invitation? *Today's Readings:* Genesis 3:9–15, 20; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4; Ephesians 1:3–6, 11–12; Luke 1:26–38.

Wednesday, December 9, 2015 Hope for the Weary

When have you felt weary or in a slump during your faith journey? Today's readings tell us that God is never weary and is everlasting. Those who keep their sight on the Lord will be renewed and will not grow weary. Jesus invites us to come and find rest in him. Take time to journal today and list the times you have felt weary and then ask God to refresh your spirit. *Today's Readings:* Isaiah 40:25–31; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 8 and 10; Matthew 11:28–30.

Thursday, December 10, 2015 The Kingdom of God

In the Gospel, Jesus identifies John the Baptist as the prophet who precedes God's coming kingdom (Malachi 3:1). Jesus is also clear that John has not brought the kingdom but that his arrest and imprisonment are attacks against it. Tonight at dinner, invite your family or friends to pray for peace and reconciliation so that the Kingdom of God might be known. *Today's Readings:* Isaiah 41:13–20; Psalm 145:1 and 9, 10–11, 12–13ab; Matthew 11:11–15.

Friday, December 11, 2015 Listen Well

Listening isn't always easy. To listen well, we have to be fully present to the one speaking. As we listen to the Gospel today, we learn that "this generation" rejects both Jesus and John. The generation is unwilling to cooperate with God's will. The Responsorial Psalm reminds us that those who embrace God's path will have eternal life. Today, light your Advent wreath and sit in silent meditation. Listen to God's voice and give thanks. *Today's Readings:* Isaiah 48:17–19; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4 and 6; Matthew 11:16–19.

Saturday, December 12, 2015 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Mary's appearance to Juan Diego is a reminder that God stands with the poor and marginalized. Sent by God, Mary reminds us that God loves all people and rescues them from evil through Jesus, his Son. This message is not a new one, but one that is clear in Jesus' preaching about the coming kingdom. We should "sing and rejoice" at this wonderful news and remember that we cooperate in Christ's mission to reveal the kingdom. How does your family or parish help the poor and marginalized? Consider creating Advent greeting cards for the downtrodden. *Today's Readings:* Zechariah 2:14–17 or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab; Judith 13:18bcde, 19; Luke 1:26–38 or Luke 1:39–47; or any readings from Ritual Masses in the Lectionary (vol. 4), the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 707–712.

