



### Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus,  
Increase our faith during this season of Advent.  
Awaken us to Your truth and fill us with Your light,  
love and peace. Return to us and bring us to our  
heavenly home, where You live and reign with the  
Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

### Commentary

#### 1st Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

The prophet Isaiah lived about 700 years before Christ, and he probably witnessed the horrific destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. But he never gave up his deep faith and hope in God.

The southern kingdom of Israel, centered in Jerusalem, lived in fear that they, too, would be destroyed. In spite of great turmoil, Isaiah's proclaimed a message of hope and a message of peace — a peace that flows only from walking in God's way.

Once God's way was accepted, the nations experienced a dramatic change. Warfare disappeared from the human landscape. Jerusalem now served as a beacon of light in a world of darkness and sin.

The Season of Advent offers us an opportunity to seek peace rather than division. It is a time to put away warfare and strife, and as a people of a Heavenly Jerusalem, to be a beacon of light and hope in a world of division and ignorance.

### Questions

How can I walk in God's way to seek inner peace?  
What do I teach others by example?

### Commentary

#### 2nd Reading: Romans 13:11-14

St. Paul is telling his readers that it's time to wake up from our indifference and be aware that Christ is returning. Those of us who have forgotten about God or grown cold in our love for Him need to arise, turn away from our sinful ways and return to His embrace.

## 1st Sunday of Advent

The key to Paul's spirituality is that Jesus' resurrection from the dead changed everything. Jesus' saving death on the cross atoned for our sins and opened the gates of heaven for us. We're called to be part of God's Kingdom, a kingdom not of this world but rather for the meek and the humble, where we forgive our enemies.

The metaphor of "putting on Christ" is one of Paul's favorite sayings. It expresses the invitation to get beyond ourselves and become people awake to the presence of God, people who live with integrity and desire to follow Jesus and live in His freedom.

### Question

What can I do to be more in God's presence during Advent?

We now begin a new Liturgical Year with the First Sunday of Advent.

Over the next four weeks, you will be invited to reflect on these commentaries for each Sunday of Advent.

Bring someone back to the Church by inviting him or her to break open the Word of God through *Christ in Our Neighborhood*.

## Commentary

### Gospel: Matthew 24:37-44

Throughout this entire passage, Matthew emphasizes the theme of being prepared for the coming of the Lord. He writes of those who lived at the time of Noah and who were not prepared for the flood until the day it happened. Similarly, the coming of the Son of Man will come without advance notice.

Examples of two men in a field and two women grinding at the mill — one prepared and the other not prepared — continue to illustrate Jesus' point that the Lord will return at an unexpected time. The question for us is, "Who will be taken up to the kingdom and who will be left behind?" The answer is: The one who is prepared!

Matthew's theme of being prepared will be the very theme of our Advent Season.

There is no way we will know the day or hour when God calls us to himself. However the way not to be caught off guard is to be constantly watchful and prepared for the final day and hour. We must live as if each day will be our last.

## Question

How will I live each day in Advent in preparation for both Christmas and eternal life?

## This Week's Task

Begin a Liturgical Year journal.

Consider purchasing a simple journal at a bookstore or writing on your Facebook Page or blog your thoughts on some themes that come up during this Season of Advent.

Write down why these themes are important to you. After some time, review your thoughts and see how you have progressed on your spiritual journey with the Lord.

Journaling is an easy way to progress in your spiritual development and to be prepared as you await Christ's return.

## Group Prayer

The group offers the following by Henry Alvord (1810-1871):

We walk by faith and not by sight;  
No gracious words we hear  
of him who spoke as none e'er spoke,  
but we believe him near.

Continue with Psalm 122

## Psalm

**Response: Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

I rejoiced because they said to me,  
"We will go up to the house of the LORD."  
And now we have set foot  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Jerusalem, built as a city  
with compact unity.

To it the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

According to the decree for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
In it are set up judgment seats,  
seats for the house of David.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!  
May those who love you prosper!  
May peace be within your walls,  
prosperity in your buildings.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Because of my brothers and friends  
I will say, "Peace be within you!"  
Because of the house of the LORD, our God,  
I will pray for your good.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

**Conclude with an Our Father**