



# Christ in Our Neighborhood

## Prayer

Loving Father, As we begin this new season of grace, fill us with the joyful virtue of hope. Help us to long for your Son Jesus with love in our hearts. Let us remain faithful until Jesus returns in glory. Amen.

## Commentary

### 1st Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

What joyful news!

Though the people of Israel had sinned, the Lord promises to eliminate (expiate) their wrongs and give them a double dose of comfort.

We can't ever outdo God's generosity. We wrong Him, and He pardons us. Moreover, He takes us back as a shepherd gathers lambs in his bosom.

There is a wonderful statue at the priests' house of prayer in Los Angeles of Jesus holding a young lamb. Jesus is laughing as the lamb is struggling to jump out of his grasp.

This is the image that we should consider as we celebrate this season of Advent. Jesus, our Lord and God, shepherds us with generosity. The Lord wants us to be with Him. He also knows that we want to be with Him. However, God is very aware of our desire to go astray. Thankfully, His justice is coupled with mercy. As our Responsorial Psalm proclaims, "justice and peace shall kiss."

Generously, our Lord takes us back and gives us double the grace. He gives us Himself.

## Question

Is the Lord generous to you despite your sins? How?

## Commentary

### 2nd Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14

Jeanne Calment, the oldest woman recorded to ever have lived, was 122 before she died in France. Reportedly, when asked when she would expect to die, she responded, "I don't know. I think God forgot I was down here."

It has been nearly 2,000 years since the Lord ascended into heaven with the promise that He would come again.

Patience, Christians have been waiting. However, patience has run thin for many and they have just given up on the promise. Some people get the sense that the Lord forgot we were down here. "What's the delay?" they ask.

St. Peter reminds us that "the Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," for the Lord's sense of time is not our own.

We don't know when the Lord will come, but we must always be prepared. When the Lord said that He would return in glory, He never gave a time stamp. For this reason, we must wait with patience.

## Question

Are you a patient person?

**Are you interested in receiving free commentaries for your own personal or group reflections during this 4 week series and throughout the year?**

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## Commentary

### Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Mark gives us an introduction to an unusual person. We have become accustomed to John the Baptist. But, imagine reading this Sacred Book for the first time and reading about this man in the desert, wearing camel's hair, a belt around his waist, and eating things that you would normally kill with a can of bug spray.

Truly, John was an unusual prophet for an unusual event in world history. He was "preparing the way" (a reference to the 1st Reading from Isaiah) for God Himself who would make the paths straight.

It is Christ Jesus who would come to fill in the valleys and lower the hills so that all people would live on a level playing field. In Christ, "kindness and peace would meet and justice and peace would kiss" (Responsorial Psalm).

John the Baptist's extraordinary character is nothing compared to the person or the life changing events that would follow.

## Question

John pointed to something bigger in our lives. He showed us the Lord. How do you point to the Lord in your life?

## This Week's Task

Advent is a time to prepare ourselves spiritually. The season offers us a time to be reconciled to the Lord.

Consider visiting your parish for an Advent Penance Service or going to confession on Saturday.

As you prepare for confession, consider reviewing the 10 Commandments or the two greatest Commandments (Loving God and loving others as we love ourselves).

This would be a great way to prepare yourself for Christmas and to make a New Year's resolution to change your pattern of behavior.

## Group Prayer

Pray or sing this traditional Advent hymn:

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

The prayer continues with Psalm 85

## Psalm

**Response: Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

I will hear what God proclaims;  
the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people.  
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,  
glory dwelling in our land.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

Kindness and truth shall meet;  
justice and peace shall kiss.  
Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
and justice shall look down from heaven.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

The LORD himself will give his benefits;  
our land shall yield its increase.  
Justice shall walk before him,  
and prepare the way of his steps.

**R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

**Conclude with an Our Father**