

Meditations: Sunday of the First Week of Advent (Year A)

Some reflections that can guide our prayer during the 1st week of Advent.

- Beginning again each day
- Upheld by God's grace
- Trusting in his help

TODAY WE begin the season of Advent, a time of waiting as we anticipate the coming of Jesus. The

liturgy for this Sunday invites us to reflect on our lives in light of our Lord's arrival: "Grant your faithful, 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."^[1] Our entire existence is a time of waiting until that great day when Jesus comes to bring us to Himself. To prepare for this encounter, the wisdom of the Church urges us to ask God for a deeper desire to do good.

Saint Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans: "The hour has come for you to awake from your sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed" (*Rom 13:11*). God gave us this world as an inheritance. He wants us to dedicate ourselves to caring for his people, and encourages us to sow goodness in our lives and in those around us. Someday (we

don't know when) our Lord will come to bring us to Himself. What joy we will give Christ's heart when we go out to meet Him! Until that moment arrives, we desire to be vigilant, because we know neither the day nor the hour.

Advent is an opportune time to examine the tasks God has entrusted to us and to assess how we are fulfilling them. Alongside gratitude for the many joys we have experienced, we might recognize areas where we have fallen short. Today we can resolve to begin anew in those areas, following the advice that St. Josemaría often gave: "Begin again? Yes, begin again. I (I imagine you do too) begin again every day, every hour, every time I make an act of contrition, I begin again."^[2]

“WATCH, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming” (*Mt 24:42*). This exhortation of Jesus may seem to us to have an overly urgent tone. But isn’t this the truth? Life is short, time passes very quickly, and it can happen that, due to the frenetic pace at which we often live, some central aspects of our existence are left in the background. Our Lord desires to be with us, to ensure that we do not forget Him, and therefore He calls us again and again. The invitation to watch is an expression of God’s will; it is a way of awakening us if we are somewhat asleep. Jesus invites us to savor anew what is essential.

“Watch.” Our Lord calls us to renew our desire for holiness, to turn back to God whenever necessary. This is the same invitation that Saint Paul addresses to the Romans: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be mindful of the flesh” (*Rom 13:14*).

Ultimately, it is about striving to live “not in a worldly manner, but rather according to the style of the Gospel: to love God with all one’s being, and love one’s neighbor as Jesus loved, that is, in service and in giving oneself. Covetousness of goods, the desire to have goods, does not satisfy the heart, but rather causes more hunger!”^[3] Jesus offers Himself to us as a gift to help us attain this new life. As we prepare for the birth of the Child Jesus, we can consider these truths. Our Lord wants to fill us with his grace. This season of Advent, a time of waiting, is an opportunity to open ourselves to this gift and welcome it wholeheartedly. And thus the best version, the best self of each of us, will become a reality.

OUR LIFE is a marvelous gift from God. During Advent, a time of special

grace, the Church continually reminds us of this truth: God is worth much more than the things that suffocate and diminish love, things that ultimately bring pain and dissatisfaction. “In a society that often focuses too much on material comfort, faith helps us to lift our eyes and discover the true dimension of our existence. If we are bearers of the Gospel, our journey through this earth will be fruitful.”^[4] This can be a good goal for us during Advent.

Conversion is, above all, a grace: light to see and strength to want to. We long to look upon God’s face, that we may be saved. We know that our limitations don’t define us; rather, we are upheld by God’s infinite power. We should tell Him frequently: “Lord, we place our trust in You.” God deeply respects our freedom and waits for us to invite Him into our lives. If we ask Him to help us, and leave in his hands the most difficult tasks while faithfully

carrying out those within our reach, we can be certain that He will grant us his light and strength

Mindful of our Lord's call to be vigilant, we want to remain lovingly attentive, even when fatigue weighs on us. We can rely on Mary's presence to do so. Our Lady lived in hope-filled vigilance during the months of carrying Jesus in her womb. She will help us stay awake and joyful, ready to begin again whenever necessary, until the day our Jesus arrives.

^[1] Roman Missal, Collect for the First Sunday of Advent.

^[2] *In Dialogue with the Lord*, critical-historical edition, p. 143.

^[3] Francis, Angelus, 4 August 2019.

^[4] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, "Light to See, Strength to Want To," *ABC*, September 18, 2018

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