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

Some reflections that can guide our prayer during the first week of Advent. The topics are: beginning again every day; supported by God's grace; trusting in his help.

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- Beginning again every day
- Supported 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 the 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.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says: *Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand (Lk 21:28)*. God has entrusted this world to us, inviting us to care for his people and

encouraging us to sow goodness in our lives and the lives of those around us. Someday — though we do not know when — the Lord will return. What a joy it will be to meet Him on that day! Until then, we desire to remain vigilant, for we do not know the day or the hour.

In Jesus' presence, we can reflect on the trust God has placed in us by making us participants in his mission. 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]

BE VIGILANT; pray at all times (Lk 21:36). The Lord's exhortation in today's Gospel might strike us as too urgent. But is it not true? Life is brief; time passes quickly, and the frenetic pace we often maintain can push aside the central aspects of our existence. Jesus wants to be with us, and He does not want us to forget Him. His call to vigilance is an expression of this desire; a way of awakening us if we are spiritually drowsy or overly absorbed in the immediate concerns that seem so pressing. Jesus invites us to savor what is essential once again.

Be vigilant. Our Lord lovingly calls us to renew our desire for holiness, to redirect toward God whatever needs conversion. St. Paul, in the second reading of the Mass, reminds us that the work of our sanctification is not only the fruit of our efforts but also

God's work: *May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all (1 Thes 3:12).*

Divine help has been granted to us. We have been enriched by it. Jesus invites us into communion with Him, and, astonishingly, He offers himself to us as the gift that enables us to attain this new life. As we prepare both outwardly and inwardly for the birth of the Christ Child, we can reflect on these truths. God wants to fill us with his grace, love, mercy, tenderness, humility, fortitude, and wisdom. This Advent, a time of waiting, is an opportunity to open our hearts fully to this grace. In doing so, we can reveal the best version of ourselves, the very best that each of us is capable of becoming.

OUR LIVES are marvelous gifts from God. During Advent, a time of special grace, the Church continually reminds us of this truth: God is greater than the things that suffocate or 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 gaze and discover the true dimension of our existence. If we are bearers of the Gospel, our journey through this earth will be fruitful.”^[3] Is that not what we want this Advent: to lift our gaze, rediscover the true dimension of our lives, and learn to leave a lasting impact as we journey through this world? We can pray with the words of the Psalm: *Make known to me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths (Ps 25:4).*

Conversion is, above all, a grace: light to see and the strength to want to. We long to look upon God’s face, that

we may be saved. We know our limitations do not define us; rather, we are upheld by the infinite power of God.

“Lord, we place our trust in You.” We need to tell Him so, because God deeply respects our freedom and waits for us to invite Him into our lives. If we ask Him, listen to his words, and try to put them into practice, entrusting Him with the most difficult tasks while faithfully attending to those within our reach, we can be certain that He will grant us his light and strength.

Knowing who our Lord is and mindful of his call to vigilance, we want to remain lovingly attentive, even when fatigue weighs on us. We can rely on Mary’s presence: she lived in expectant vigilance during the months of carrying the Lord in her womb, and she will help us stay awake and joyful, ready to begin

again whenever necessary, until our Jesus arrives.

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

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

[3] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, “Light to See, Strength to Want To,” *ABC*, September 18, 2018

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