

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Bless Our Advent Time

Eternal God,
you are the architect of time.
As we prepare for your promised coming,
guide us to turn toward you.
Let us see your face and we shall be saved.
Bless our Advent wreath.
As we light each candle,

may the flame of Christ's coming
grow brighter
and enkindle our eagerness
to welcome him into our hearts, lives,
and world.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Come, Lord Jesus



Today's readings: Isaiah 63:16b–17, 19b; 64:2–7; Psalm 80:2–3, 15–16, 18–19; 1 Corinthians 1:3–9; Mark 13:33–37. The season of Advent (from the Latin *adventus* meaning “coming”) is a time to prepare for the coming of Christ. We anticipate three advents: the first is the historical coming of the Christ two thousand years ago; the second, the coming of Christ among us now; and the third advent, the hope of Christ coming again at the end of time.

Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. This year, it lands in early December, shortening our Advent season by an entire week. One of the best-known customs of the season is the Advent wreath. The circle of evergreens

symbolizes the eternal character of God's time and Christ's reach into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles on the wreath—three violet, one rose—mark our progress through the season. The rose candle is for the Third Sunday of Advent, called *Gaudete Sunday* after the first word of the entrance antiphon on that day, meaning “rejoice.” The day symbolizes our joy as we draw closer to the birth of Christ. Bless your Advent wreath with the lighting of the first violet candle, and as a prayerful entrance into Advent invoke today's psalm response: “Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved” (Psalm 80:4).



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 4

Say the Word

Today's Gospel relates a miracle performed by Jesus. Within the dialogue, the words of a Roman soldier become what we pray at Mass: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." The soldier understands that Jesus' words carry divine power. Throughout Advent, we follow the soldier's example of faith by assuming a stance of humility and openness to the work of the Lord. *Today's readings: Isaiah 2:1–5; Psalm 122:1–2, 3–4, 4–5, 6–7, 8–9; Matthew 8:5–11.*

Tuesday, December 5

The Shoot of Jesse

The Jesse tree is an Advent custom that helps us connect the festive practice of decorating Christmas trees to Jesus' biblical ancestors. Its name is derived from today's first reading, "A shoot shall come out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). Jesse, the father of King David, is often looked upon as the first person in the genealogy of Jesus. For your Jesse tree, start with a bare branch and hang a new ornament every day. These ornaments represent the individual figures from the Bible. They can be made from any material you choose. *Today's readings: Isaiah 11:1–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 12–13, 17; Luke 10:21–24.*

Wednesday, December 6

St. Nicholas

St. Nicholas was the bishop of Myra (modern-day Turkey) in the fourth century. According to legend, he anonymously provided generous help to those in need. One story says he dropped bags of gold down the chimneys of poor families, widows, and orphans. Surprise family members with a stocking filled with gifts. Plan an anonymous gift for a person or agency in need this Advent. *Today's readings: Isaiah 25:6–10a; Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6; Matthew 15:29–37.*

Thursday, December 7

St. Ambrose

St. Ambrose served as the bishop of Milan during the fourth century. A brilliant theologian and doctor of the Church, St. Ambrose helped articulate the Christian faith through his writings. He is also remembered for a beautiful Advent carol, "O Come, Redeemer of the Earth." Create your own playlist of Advent music to keep your heart and mind firmly planted in the spirituality of preparation. *Today's readings: Isaiah 26:1–6; Psalm 118:1, 8–9, 19–21, 25–27a; Matthew 7:21, 24–27.*

Friday, December 8

Immaculate Conception

The Church sets aside today as a holyday of obligation, recognizing that Mary was conceived without original sin so that she could become the vessel to bear God made flesh. Today's Gospel highlights the fullness of grace given to Mary, by which she said *yes* to God's plan for her life. Advent is a perfect time to pray the joyful mysteries of the Rosary, from the mystery of the annunciation through the incarnation to the rearing of Jesus in faith. *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.*

Saturday, December 9

St. Juan Diego

On December 9, 1531, the Virgin Mary asked Juan Diego to tell the bishop that she desired a temple to be built on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. From this place, she would hear the anguish of all who live in the region and respond with love, compassion, and protection. Hesitant to accept Juan Diego's account of Mary's appearance, the bishop requested a sign. Mary sent Juan Diego to pick roses where only desert plants grew. She arranged the roses in Juan's cloak and sent him back to the bishop. When Juan opened his tilma before the bishop, he discovered an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe imprinted on it. *Today's readings: Isaiah 30:19–21, 23–26; Psalm 147:1–2, 3–4, 5–6; Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8.*

