

# First Sunday of Advent – November 29, 2009 – Good Shepherd Parish

## Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land. In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure; this is what they shall call her: "The LORD our justice."

## Psalm: Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14

R. (1b) To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;  
teach me your paths,  
guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my savior,  
and for you I wait all the day.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Good and upright is the LORD;  
thus he shows sinners the way.  
He guides the humble to justice,  
and teaches the humble his way.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

All the paths of the LORD are kindness and  
constancy  
toward those who keep his covenant and his  
decrees.  
The friendship of the LORD is with those who  
fear him,  
and his covenant, for their instruction.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

## Scripture Reading: 1Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Brothers and sisters: May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen.

Finally, brothers and sisters, we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves to please God -and as you are conducting yourselves- you do so even more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

## Gospel: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."



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## **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

## **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

Why do we have Advent? "I don't know, it always just comes along," or, "I don't know, no one ever told me." I have heard these questions and others a number of times. Especially this one: if Christ has already been born, what is this Advent waiting about? Have we forgotten about his birthing? Strangely that is part of the answer. It has to do with his birth into our hearts each year. Our hearts are drowsy and forgetful, tired out by the anxieties of daily life. Maybe we distract ourselves from our troubles by working very hard, or becoming depressed, or becoming fascinated with (you name yours) drink, or out-of-control emotions, or gambling, or email, or golf, or surfing the web, or pride, or, or, or. Whatever it is for you, the very clear message of Advent is, "Settle down for a while." Open the door just a crack to let God in.

The Church has a liturgical strategy in the Advent Sunday readings. Each week's First Reading is the carrot: usually positive, a promise of good. The Gospel is the stick. Take the [First Reading](#) this Sunday. It reminds us of the promise God has made to his people: Rightness and justice will come to the earth. Security. The day of the Lord will arrive, though long delayed. Peace in our day. What a lovely thing it is to desire such a time. Is it too good to be true? Is it just pious thought? Read the First Reading now and ask yourself those questions. Spend time with them. Pray to God for help. The [Responsorial Psalm](#) will help you. It asks God to make known his ways to us, to guide us and teach us. The [Second Reading](#) urges us to put God's promise of peace into action, even if we are not yet sure what it means. Love others and be loved.

Ah, and then the [Gospel](#). It tries to wake us up, especially if the above has not helped. "But I am perfectly awake," you say. Alright then, go ahead and read the Gospel. It is the "stick." Signs in the sun, moon and stars, nations in dismay, the roaring of the sea and the waves, people dying of fright, and the Son of Man appearing in the clouds with power and great glory. Terrifying. Are you ready for it? Let yourself imagine it what this might be like. Picture it scene by scene and don't worry about being exact. Just experience it. Will such a shakeup really happen literally? We do not know. Maybe much worse is to come, judging from the state of the world today. Do you live without fear of terrorist acts, of proliferating nuclear weapons, of a crash of the entire economy or the greed that fills so many hearts to overflowing in your city, in your state, your world? If you can say "You are right, I am afraid of these," then go back to the Responsorial Psalm and pray. Beg that Christ be given birth in your soul and in so many others in this world that need it so badly. Welcome to Advent.

## **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. Advent is a process of looking back at Christ's birth and the inauguration of his kingdom on earth and looking forward to its fulfillment. What does Advent awaken in you? Does anything in your daily life interfere with your spiritual Advent preparation?
2. Why is Advent called the season of hope? Why is hope vital to your life? Describe some ways that others have brought hope to your life.
3. What can you do to bring hope to people you know?
4. Jesus tells us to pray for strength. Do you believe that if you ask for strength you will receive it? Could God send it through other people? Could you be a source of strength for others?

## **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

## **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming and call us to his side in the kingdom of heaven, where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen