

**Wellspring**  
**Fransalian Center for Spirituality**

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November 28, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we begin the Season of Advent. Celebrating the Season of Advent every year has been one of the most joyful traditions of all Christian communities. Advent is a time of watching and waiting, of eager longing for the Messiah, for the one who can heal us, save us, make us whole. In waiting, we must await God coming in His time, in His season, in His way. In waiting, we may often wait alone. Others may leave, may give up, may not care, may be busy about many things. But we must wait in silence, in solitude, in prayer. We must wait empty, open, poor, hungry, thirsty, longing..... We must make space for the Messiah, for He comes in His time.

The Season of Advent is a time of joyful, faith-filled waiting. We are invited to consider the weeks of preparation for Christmas as an opportunity for nurturing a spirituality of waiting in expectation - not a passive, inactive, idle, and unimaginative presence in space and time - but a dynamic, active, and positively imaginative waiting - a spiritual posture of waiting and longing for Christ, praying and preparing for his ultimate appearance among us - a spirituality of hope, simple and pure optimism about us and the world around us. Each week we are encouraged to deepen our spirituality even further, personally and as a faith community.

Dynamic waiting, positive thinking, optimistic living, hope-filled anticipation, and joyful and faith-filled presence are to characterize all our Advent days and nights because we wait for Jesus, the incarnation of God's steadfast, unconditional, everlasting, and ever faithful love. Jesus came to liberate all people from all forms of enslavement: sickness, poverty, injustice, corruption, inequality and so on. Jesus, in words and deeds, taught us that salvation and liberation are not simply otherworldly realities - they are to shape and form and transform our life.

The Season of Advent is meant to be a deeply spiritual experience. It reminds us that our faith in God, our hope in His promises and our love for Him and each other are the greatest wealth that we possess. It reminds us that we are a privileged people, a people blessed and graced by God's unconditional love revealed in Jesus; that God has not abandoned the world. He breaks into our history. He enters into our history. The birth of Jesus, the incarnation, is real. The presence of or even the height of evil must not discourage us. The apparent brokenness and disintegration will be healed. God continues to bring about healing, integrity, and wholeness.

This year our Sunday Scripture readings are from "Cycle C" of the Lectionary. Thoughts of "justice and peace" permeate the Scripture readings of the four Sundays of Advent. God will raise a "just shoot" in the line of David, who will restore God's people and who will establish justice and peace for all. Jesus came proclaiming "justice and peace" for all. We continue his

mission...we dream of justice and peace...we work for justice and peace...and we live in justice and peace. Let this season of Advent call us to and bless us with "Justice and Peace"

In the first Scripture reading of today's mass, we listen to Jeremiah reminding his people of God's promise to raise a "just shoot" in the line of David who would establish justice and peace and restore the fortunes and future of Israel. In the second reading, we hear St. Paul encouraging the Thessalonians to be prepared and be ready to meet him by living "lovingly and blamelessly".

The Gospel reading of today's mass is Luke 21:25-28; 34-36. The twenty verses that precede this excerpt (Luke 21:5-25), Luke describes the prophesies of Jesus regarding the fall of Jerusalem and the terrible experience that follow. They admired the beauty and glory of their temple and gazed at it with amazement! They thought they were privileged to be in the presence of a beautiful and enduring reality, the construction of which took over 80 years. Besides its obvious beauty, the fact that the temple was revered as God's dwelling place on earth made it a permanent structure in Jewish life and spirituality. So, they were shocked and angry at the prediction Jesus made!

When Luke wrote his Gospel, the prediction of Jesus had come true! The temple was gone! Titus and his troops had conquered Jerusalem and leveled the temple in the year 70 C.E. But God had not gone from there, nor was he gone from the hearts of the believers! The harsh realities that Jesus predicted did come true and believers faced them with courage. Luke tells us how Jesus encouraged the disciples to accept these hardships as opportunities to bear witness to him and to the good news of salvation. He says: "stand up straight and raise your heads for your ransom is near at hand" - remember his teachings, trust his word, and not to give over to apocalyptic anxiety. He warned them about doomsday prophets, "many will come in my name.....do not follow them....." He encourages us not to worry about fearful omens and not give in to the dread of suffering that could come because of following him. Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized that suffering persecution for the sake of the Kingdom and for the cause of justice was an integral part of being a disciple.

It is good for us to be attentive to the warning Jesus gave to his disciples "to trust his word and not to give over to apocalyptic anxiety." Our faith today is being tested. We need to stand our ground and be deeply rooted in our faith and spiritual tradition. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to live "loving and blameless" lives. This is what Jesus teaches us today, "stand up straight and raise your heads..." Our faith must be true, our witness must be authentic and continuous, our prayer must be intense and unceasing, our service must be generous and practical, our hope must be our strength, our love must be forgiving, gracious and benevolent!

Our Scripture readings of the first Sunday of Advent call us to "be attentive and watchful," "Pray constantly for strength," and to live "loving and blameless" lives. Let us take a few quiet moments each day of this week to reflect on how our day has been and how watchful, prayerful, loving, and blameless we have been as we took care of our daily chores, and responsibilities.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

# **First Sunday of Advent**

**November 28, 2021**

## **Collect**

Grant your faithful, we pray, 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.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

## **Liturgy of the Word**

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

### **Jeremiah 33:14-16**

This prophesy of Jeremiah may have been occasioned by the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and the subsequent exile of the people. Israel had lost hope as their cities were destroyed and the people were being sent into exile. Jeremiah offered them hope. He reminded them of the promise of God to restore the fortunes and future of Israel. God had promised to raise a “just shoot” in the line of David. This “just shoot” would establish justice and peace and restore Israel and Judah. We know today that Jesus is this “just shoot” in the line of David.

**The Lord calls us to live a life of justice and peace and to strive for establishing justice and peace which are integral parts of the reign of God.**

### **Pray Psalm 25**

This is an acrostic (alphabetic) Psalm – each single verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. Read the Psalm carefully and see how the Psalmist speaks of God as “the way, the truth and the life” and asks God to teach him His “way, truth and life”– Jesus will, years later, speak of himself as the way, the truth, and the life. This Psalm carries for us the following insights: Mistakes of the past can weigh heavily and burden my spirit. People can bring me shame, disgrace, and dishonor. But I desire God’s way and His way is a way of compassion and mercy. I know God’s way can guide me rightly and bring me peace and make me whole. I must accept God’s way, God’s saving rule, God’s wisdom, with reverence.

In God's way, I find forgiveness, grace, and peace. In God, I find a firm, guiding hand, a warm, loving friend, a strong companion on my journey. God shows the way and I follow. I seek to know and embrace God's truth, God's life and God's mercy.

**Make known to me your ways, LORD;  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me by your fidelity and teach me,  
for you are God my savior,  
for you I wait all the day long.**

## **I Thessalonians 3:12-4:2**

Paul believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. So, he encouraged the Thessalonians to be prepared and be ready to meet him. The way to prepare was to "live lovingly and blamelessly". He praised them for their sincerity of efforts in this regard and encouraged them to "make still greater progress". Advent is a time when we are specially reminded of living "lovingly and blamelessly".

## **Luke 21:25-28; 34-36**

In Luke 21:5-25 which precedes this excerpt, Luke describes the prophesies of Jesus regarding the fall of Jerusalem and the terrible experience that follow. They admired the beauty and glory of their temple - gazed at it with amazement! They thought they were privileged to be in the presence of a beautiful and enduring reality, the construction of which took over 80 years. Besides its obvious beauty, the fact that the temple was revered as God's dwelling place on earth made it a permanent structure in Jewish life and spirituality. So, they were shocked at the prediction Jesus made! Even angry! When Luke wrote his Gospel, the prediction of Jesus had come true! The temple was gone! Titus and his troops had conquered Jerusalem and leveled the temple in 70 C.E.

**But God had not gone from there, nor was he gone from the hearts of the believers! What Jesus predicted did come true and believers faced them with courage.**

Luke tells us how Jesus encouraged the disciples to accept these hardships as opportunities to bear witness to him and to the good news of salvation. He says: "stand up straight and raise your heads for your ransom is near at hand" - remember his teachings, trust his word, and not give over to apocalyptic anxiety. He warned them about doomsday prophets and encouraged them not to worry about fearful omens and not give in to the dread of suffering that could come as a result of following him.

**Our faith today is being tested. We need to stand our ground - be deeply rooted in our faith and spiritual tradition. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to live "loving and blameless" lives. This is what Jesus teaches us today, "stand up straight and raise your heads..." and "trust his word, and not give over to apocalyptic anxiety."**

**Our faith must be true, our witness must be authentic and continuous, our prayer must be intense and unceasing, our service must be generous and practical, our hope must be our strength, our love must be forgiving and gracious and benevolent.....**

Jesus had talked about the “Day of the Lord” and the terrible events that surround that day. He talked about what he himself had to face and what his disciples eventually would face. Hearing all this, the disciples wanted to know what they should do and what signs they should be looking for. Jesus used familiar imageries of sun, moon, stars, gathering of clouds, budding fig tree, etc. to describe the reality of God breaking into history. Jesus called them to recognize the coming of God in all happenings.

Jesus continued to call his disciples to be alert and awake and to stand strong. He told them about the difficulties ahead. Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized that the suffering of persecution for the sake of the Kingdom and for the cause of justice was an integral part of being a disciple. The “Day of the Lord” will come. No one knew the time or the day or the hour. God will break in at the least expected moment, through least expected events, people, and situations. So, it is urgent to stay awake, alert, and prepared.

**Jesus said to them, and he says to us today, “Pray constantly for strength...”**

**Be Still for a few moments!**

**Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.**

## **Spiritual Communion**

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

**Be Still for a few moments!**

**Saint of the Day, November 28 - Saint James of the March and 14 other saints are remembered this day.**

St. James of the March was born Dominic Gangala in early 1390 to a poor family in the March of Ancona in central Italy. As a child, he began his studies at Offida under the guidance of his uncle, a priest, who soon afterwards sent him to school in the nearby city of Ascoli Piceno. He later studied at the University of Perugia where he took the degree of Doctor in Canon and Civil Law.

He entered the Order of Friars Minor in Assisi in 1416 and took the name Jacobus (James in English). During his novitiate, he practiced all virtues so well that he became a model of religious perfection. Soon after his ordination, he was sent out as a missionary. He traveled through Italy, Dalmatia, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia, Austria, Bohemia, Saxony, Prussia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia for over 50 years. During the years 1427 and 1428 he preached in Vienna, Augsburg, Ratisbon, Ulm, Limburg, Brandenburg, and Leipzig. He spent the last three years of his life in Naples, and died there on November 28., 1476.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

*Advent invites us to a commitment to vigilance,  
looking beyond ourselves, expanding our mind and heart,  
to open ourselves up to the needs of people, of brothers and sisters,  
and to the desire for a new world.  
(Pope Francis)*