

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



The Path

God of power and might,
you sent the prophets Elijah, Isaiah,
and John the Baptist
to call your people to the path
of righteousness.
When we wander off,
you seek us out and lead us back.
Guide us onto the right path.
Remove the obstacles that block our way.

Strengthen us to continue forward in faith
and hope.
Protect us from all that endangers us.
Compel us to support each other when
we stumble or falter.
Help us to walk the path of holiness more
quickly every day
until we are running with joy into
your kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 6, 2020

Hasten the Day



Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11; Psalm 85:9–10, 11–12, 13–14; 2 Peter 3:8–14; Mark 1:1–8. All three readings today urge us to participate in the completion of God's reign. God tells Isaiah to speak words of consolation. God's people had sinned, and as a result they had been defeated by a foreign nation and scattered from their homeland. God declares that he has forgiven them and is bringing them safely back. The glorious restoration of God's people, however, will only be possible if they turn back to God and undertake the journey home.

John the Baptist declares that the Lord's day is coming whether people want it to or not, but he also insists that people can prepare themselves for it. They can acknowledge

their sins so as to receive God's mercy and be empowered by God's Spirit when the Lord comes.

Remarkably, in our Second Reading, we are told not only to prepare, but that by striving to live as holy, faithful people, we bring God's kingdom closer to completion. For those who wonder why Christ has not yet returned in glory, St. Peter replies that God is giving us time to repent. The more quickly we allow God's Spirit to work within us, the sooner God will transform our world. We depend on God for "new heavens and a new earth," but when God sees that we are preparing ourselves and helping others to prepare for this transformation, he will hasten the day of his Son's return.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 7 St. Ambrose of Milan

God will heal his people of all that afflicts them so that they will return to their homeland and begin their lives anew. The man whom Jesus heals in the Gospel passage is also given a new life. How will we live differently when we encounter God's healing and mercy? St. Ambrose's life changed dramatically when the people of Milan asked him to become their bishop. He wasn't even baptized, but he accepted the new path that God laid out for him. May we do the same. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 35:1–10; Psalm 85:9ab and 10, 11–12, 13–4; Luke 5:17–26.*

Tuesday, December 8 Immaculate Conception

Our belief that God kept Mary free from sin in order to bear the sinless Son of God sets Mary apart from us. For some, Mary is too perfect to be relatable. The Second Reading reminds us that God planned for all of us to be holy. God overshadows us with his Spirit so that we, too, will live according to his will. Carefully read through today's Gospel. Then imagine the angel Gabriel appearing to you. What does God ask of you? How do you respond? *Today's Readings: Genesis 3:9–20; Psalm 98:1–4; Ephesians 1:3–6; 11–12; Luke 1:26–38.*

Wednesday, December 9 Yoked

When Jesus urges us to yoke ourselves to him, we might think we are the oxen and he is walking behind us, steering us. Instead, he probably means that he is yoked alongside us, sharing the weight of whatever we are pulling. As we hear in the First Reading, God so lightens our burdens and strengthens us that we seem to have wings. Every few hours, imagine Jesus walking beside you, listening and supporting you. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:25–31; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 8 and 10; Matthew 11:28–30.*

Thursday, December 10 Obstacles

God tells his people that they will cut through the mountains that block their path as they return home after being scattered by war. This time of renewal points ahead to the kingdom that Jesus brings. Those who strive to enter God's kingdom will also face obstacles, but their faithful perseverance will bring them into the fullness of God's reign. Offer people a glimpse of God's kingdom by volunteering at or donating to a local food pantry. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 41:13–20; Psalm 145:1 and 9, 10–11, 12–13ab; Matthew 11:11–15.*

Friday, December 11 Wisdom

In the Old Testament, God's wisdom is personified as Lady Wisdom. She dwells among people, teaches them, and draws them down the path of righteousness. Jesus both teaches and embodies God's wisdom. Despite the crowd's refusal to believe it, Jesus is doing the work of God. He remains with us today, guiding us down the path of righteousness. The Book of Proverbs 10–29 is a collection of wise sayings. Choose several that apply to you, and bring them into your prayer. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 48:17–19; Psalm 1:1–6; Matthew 11:16–19.*

Saturday, December 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe

The angel greeted Mary by calling her "favored one." This term implied that Mary had a patron who had commissioned her for some kind of work. Since Mary was a young woman from an insignificant village and God was her patron, she was understandably worried about what she could do for God. As it turned out, she could do a great deal. Just as God favored her, so she revealed God's favor to others, such as the indigenous people of Mexico. What do you need Our Lady of Guadalupe to reveal to you? *Today's Readings: Zechariah 2:14–17 or Revelation 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab; Luke 1:26–38 or Luke 1:39–47.*

