

Today we begin a new liturgical year in the Church with the First Sunday of Advent. It's a chance for a fresh, new start. We don't have to be stuck in the same rut of past sins and mistakes. We get to begin again.

And what message does God give us on this new day? Stay awake, be alert. Watch for the coming of Christ. As I said in a homily a few weeks ago, we must strive to prepare for Jesus' coming in several senses, and that's what Advent is all about. We prepare to commemorate His first coming as the child born in Bethlehem, for His coming at the end of our lives and the end of time, but also for the ways that Jesus comes to us at every moment of our lives. After all, Jesus says, "I am with you always, even until the end of the age." It's important that we be attentive to Jesus' presence in our lives here and now, otherwise, if we always put it off, then we will never be ready to welcome Him.

Our first reading today, from the Prophet Isaiah, presents a number of ways we can think about God and our relationship with Him. First, God is our Father. Isaiah acknowledges that we sometimes wander away from Him, like the prodigal son, but that can never change the fact that God is our loving Father, always looking out for us, attentive to our needs, and always ready to welcome us back when we've gone astray. This Advent, let's resolve to put wandering behind us, and go home to God our Father.

Second, God is like a potter, shaping the clay of our lives. But just as dry clay cannot be shaped well, but only cracks and crumbles, if we are resisting God's guidance in our lives, then we will also be unable to be shaped by God. This Advent, let's ask ourselves, "Where am I resistant to God in my life? Where do I feel Him gently nudging me to change?" Then, let's resolve to allow God to work on us, and craft us into His masterpiece.

Let's not just let Advent pass us by in the rush toward Christmas. Let's take more time to pray, come to Mass more often and Confession, or pick up an Advent reflection booklet. Let us turn to God our Father, trusting that He will help us to prepare to celebrate Christ's coming with joy.