



# Parish of the Holy Eucharist

Small Group Faith Sharing Material

1st Sunday of Advent—December 1, 2013

Sunday Readings



## Opening Prayer

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.

*(source: The Roman Missal, Third Typical Edition)*



## Mass Readings

### Reading 1

**Is 2:1-5**

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In days to come, the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it; many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

*The Word of the Lord*

### Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 122: 1-9**

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

I rejoiced because they said to me,  
"We will go up to the house of the LORD."  
And now we have set foot  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Jerusalem, built as a city  
with compact unity.  
To it the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

According to the decree for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
In it are set up judgment seats,  
seats for the house of David.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!  
May those who love you prosper!  
May peace be within your walls,  
prosperity in your buildings.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Because of my brothers and friends  
I will say, "Peace be within you!"  
Because of the house of the LORD, our God,  
I will pray for your good.

**R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

## Reading 2

**Rom 13:11-14**

Brothers and sisters: You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

*The Word of the Lord*

## Gospel

**Mt 24:37-44**

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

*The Gospel of the Lord*



## Commentary

### Matthew

Even when major storms are predicted, some will persist in ignoring the warnings and find themselves in great danger. A number of persons in our country lose their lives each year because they will not believe that there is danger not only for their property but for their very lives. They attempt to "ride out" a storm when public safety officials plead with them to seek refuge in a safer place,

and they lose their lives.

Some practice the same kind of stubbornness with respect to spiritual warnings. They do not believe the prophets sent by God. The stakes are much higher than earthly life. Eternal salvation is the issue.

Jesus was not a raving fanatic, nor an incendiary zealot. He did not "cry wolf" when there was no danger. He does employ the apocalyptic language of the times in which he lived. The imagery is deliberate and effective. But, it is not just poetry. Apocalyptic prophecy truly represents a message from God.

The "coming of the Man of Heaven" marks the end of earthly existence for the Church. With that "coming," there will be inaugurated the transformation of all things into heavenly reality. In Matthew's Gospel, the Church community becomes such a central feature of the message of Christ that it cannot be exempt from the dynamism with which God will deal with the world. The Church, too, will be engulfed in the awesome and cosmic renewal with which God will envelop all of created reality. The Church becomes Kingdom. The difference for the Church is that some will be aware and ready of the coming of the Man of Heaven; some will not. "Two men...two women...." One will know what is happening; the other will be caught by surprise. The issue is awareness. Jesus wants us to be aware of what God intends for this creation of His. Jesus wants us to be prepared and willing participants in the transforming of reality. It is not enough just to be passive objects in the mighty dynamisms by which God's creation becomes God's true Kingdom. God wants us to share in making it happen. Some will and some won't! All will depend on the choices that we all make each and every day. We choose for good or we choose for evil. We are with it or outside of it.

Jesus does not intend to *frighten* his followers into faithfulness and readiness. But He does want to open our *hearts to awareness*. Jesus always calls His followers to become willing partners with Him in the building of God's Kingdom. He does not *condemn* those who are not aware and ready. But He *praises and prefers* those that are. Jesus does not say that two men should not be out in the field working or that two women should not be grinding at the mill, any more than that it is wrong for men and women to be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage in the days of Noah. He suggests that it is a matter of where our attention is focused.

### Isaiah

Even the original Isaiah who lived before the Great Exile (587-539 CE) had envisioned a day when the will of

God would be the basis for true peace among nations. On that day, even Gentiles would come to the peace that flows from surrender to the majesty of God. God's people stand as a beacon to all who seek peace and desire war no more.

## Romans

Paul speaks of the Second coming of Christ, indicating that Christians must be prepared by right conduct. We look forward to the renewal of His first coming; Paul's admonition about putting aside the "work of darkness" is most appropriate for our situation: "not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy" can we anticipate the rebirth of Christ in our lives.



### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the ways in which you consider yourself *ready, alert, aware* for the coming of God in your life? Do you have an awareness that God is entering into your daily existence through the events that occur every day? Are there some events that more clearly than others alert you to the presence of God? Is it pain and sorrow or joy and peace? What do you consider to be the most effective in helping you stay alert to God?

2. Discuss what it might mean for you and your family to be more ready for the true meaning of Christmas this year. Are you ready to be more modest in your gift giving to one another and to practice more personal expressions of love rather than expensive gifts and wrappings and ribbons and bows and all the rest? Do you feel called to a simpler kind of Christmas with more prayer than material things?



### Watch the Video

Please watch the reflection on the weekly readings prepared by the staff at Parish of the Holy Eucharist. It can be found on the parish website at [www.pothe.org](http://www.pothe.org) or

you may obtain copies of the DVD at the parish office. See [www.POTHE.org](http://www.POTHE.org) to watch the video or use the DVD provided by the parish.

### Prayers of Intercession

### Conclude with the "Our Father"

### SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Hold a family meeting on the subject of the Spirit of Christmas. See if you might be able to evolve as a family toward a more spiritual kind of observance rather than the outward show and display of commercialization of Christmas. Remember that it is really a matter of spiritual maturity to be able to give simpler gifts. It is something we need *to grow into*. We cannot make it happen all of a sudden.



## CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

### The Catechism of the Catholic Church #407

*The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil". Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals.*

The world in which we live often imagines the future as if it had no reference in the present times at all. Futurists offer a vision of a reality which does not seem to have evolved from the conditions that prevail today. There is a sense of disjointedness between today and the situations which are coming upon us. Many would have us believe that we cannot affect our own future; that our present behavior does not really affect what we will be like tomorrow. Wastefulness today does spell disaster for tomorrow, doesn't it? Our children and grandchildren will pay the price for our present-day ecological sinfulness. Can it be otherwise in the realm of the Spirit?

Living recklessly today can only lead to a seriously impaired and impoverished condition of the heart and soul in any future into which we may come. "The wages of sin are death."

"We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light. So behave properly, as people do in the day. Don't go to wild parties or get drunk or be vulgar or indecent. Don't quarrel or be jealous."

Our moral behavior will determine the condition we are in when we enter into eternal life. The white robe of salvation we put on in baptism can be stained by our personal and deliberate sinfulness. Then, we will be unacceptable for sitting with the Lord Jesus at the everlasting banquet in the Kingdom of God. It is not a matter of indifference whether we do good or do evil. We are accountable for the actions and omissions of our daily living. The Season of Advent is given us to prepare both for the final coming of the Lord in judgment and for the renewal of His coming at Christmas. It is a time of eager expectation. Looking forward to the blessings brought to the world by the Christ Child, we need to remember that we prolong and extend those blessings to our times and places in history by the works for good that we perform in anticipation of His final return.

### Credits

Opening Prayer. *Missale Romanum, Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 2008. *Roman Missal*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 2011.

Readings for Mass. Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC.

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Catechism of the Catholic Church