

“Come, O Lord, do not delay.” Each Advent we long for the second coming of our Lord. We ask him to come quickly, he in turn asks us to prepare the way of the Lord. “Come, O Lord, do not delay; forgive the sins of your people” (Gospel Acclamation). Seven psalms in particular guide us in the ways of repentance. Let us look briefly at these psalms (6, 32, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They will help us to prepare the way of the Lord this Advent:

- “Have pity on me, LORD, for I am weak; heal me, LORD, for my bones are shuddering” (Ps 6:3). We are called to clearly acknowledge our sins. With that established, we then seek God’s mercy. “Turn back, LORD, rescue my soul; save me because of your mercy” (6:5).
- “Blessed is the one whose fault is removed, whose sin is forgiven. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is no deceit” (32: 1-2). When we seek God’s mercy, we can truly feel liberated. Sin weighs us down. Sometimes we are too mired in sin to even acknowledge it. We need to do a little soul searching and often times that is possible when we reach a low point. Think of the prodigal son, when he was at his lowest point, he honestly acknowledged his own sinful desire was the root of his spiritual poverty. The Lord awaits the repentant sinner and wants to come running out to welcome him home.
- “Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. You will let me hear gladness and joy; the bones you have crushed will rejoice” (51:9-10). In the Mosaic law, hyssop, the woody twigs from a small bush made for a natural sprinkler. Hyssop was an instrument for sprinkling sacrificial blood or cleansing water. We are freed from our sin by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He shed his blood to cleanse us from our sins. When we truly appreciate that gift, when we ourselves are repentant and experience that mercy, we can experience the joy of the resurrection in our own lives.
- “Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly. For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn away as in a furnace” (102:3-4). Life is short and fragile. We ask the Lord to come quickly but is it not we who need to respond swiftly. Indeed, if our days are numbered, then we should make haste to seek God’s mercy. We say where there is smoke, there is fire. Where there is unrepentant grave sinner, there is eternal fire. God does not want the sinner to perish, but if we are obstinate in our sin, and choose eternal darkness over eternal light, then we will indeed know the pain of the eternal fire.
- “Out of the depths I call to you, LORD; Lord, hear my cry! May your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy” (130:1-2). We often pray Psalm 130 for a funeral. We who are living acknowledge that people may die with sin still weighing them down. Those who are suffering after death in purgatory, truly benefit from our sustained prayers. Our prayer for others should also be a wakeup call for ourselves and our loved ones to use this life to seek God’s mercy.
- “Show me the path I should walk, for I entrust my life to you. Rescue me, LORD, from my foes, for I seek refuge in you. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your kind spirit guide me on ground that is level” (143:8b-10). Part of seeking God’s mercy should always be a firm resolve on our part to try to do better in the future. We are often blinded by our own sin, but with God’s help we can do better. We need not repeat our sinfulness. In teaching us his will, the Lord calls us to be merciful to others, and to exercise virtue that we may overcome our vices.

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