



FIRST WEEK
OF ADVENT
WATCHFULNESS



FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
SUNDAY

LET US FLEE FROM THE DECEIT OF LIFE AND ITS SUPPOSED HAPPINESS AND RUN TO CHRIST ALONE, WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF SOULS. HIM LET US ENDEAVOR TO FIND WHO IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE, AND WHEN WE HAVE FOUND HIM LET US HOLD HIM FAST AND FALL AT HIS FEET AND EMBRACE THEM IN THE FERVOR OF OUR SOULS.

ST. SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN

RUN TO CHRIST

The Sundays of Advent are particularly important because they set the framework for the whole season and offer, for each week, a focal point and banner that stands over the days that follow. The first Sunday of Advent, which begins the whole season, has an undeniably clear message: vigilant watchfulness.

In the gospel, Christ exhorts us to watch, be vigilant, and stay awake. Christ preached these themes because of the danger of their opposites: distraction, carelessness, and spiritual drowsiness. We return to these words of Christ every single year, and on the very first day of the new liturgical year we start fresh in the fervent pursuit of what truly matters. In turn, the fresh start entails the acknowledgment of the many ways we have lost our focus and zeal for the ultimately important ideals of the Gospel.

The Collect from today's Mass places over Advent an energetic, driven resoluteness: "Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming." The outcry of the Church here is for more than just readiness; it is for fervor, and it is filled with movement. We beg God to help us *run* to Christ.

As our journey toward Christmas takes form today, we set before our hearts that toward which we press: adoration of the King of the universe, who takes up flesh to redeem all of creation and thereby to "make all things new" (Rv 21:5). The more perfectly we worship him, the greater freedom we give to God to transform our lives and bring forth the image of Christ imprinted on our souls by grace. Toward the inbreaking of the kingdom we turn our gaze; for the coming of Christ we maintain vigil; for the presence of God and the signs of his constant presence we watch. This is our Advent.

R E F L E C T

Stretch beyond a passive readiness for Christ’s arrival. What are some ways you can move with fervor and resoluteness toward Christ?

PRAY

*ALMIGHTY GOD, GRANT ME THE
RESOLVE TO RUN TO YOUR SON THIS
ADVENT SEASON, MEETING HIM WITH
A PURE HEART AND GOOD DEEDS.*

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
MONDAY

WHEREVER I GO I WILL FIND
YOU, MY GOD.

ST. JEAN-BAPTISTE DE LA SALLE

BE ALERT TO HIS PRESENCE

Have you ever noticed how often Christ called his listeners to attentive, vigilant watchfulness? Perhaps he preached these themes so frequently because he saw our tendency to become drowsy and lethargic, feeble and forgetful. The season of Advent embodies Christ's exhortation in splendid fashion. The Collect from today's Mass is instructive: "Keep us alert, we pray, O Lord our God, as we await the advent of Christ your Son, so that, when he comes and knocks, he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise."

Alertness, in spiritual terms, is a form of attentiveness, the ability to see past the surface and notice the subtler movements that are so easily lost in busyness and distraction. Spiritual alertness is marked by an interior awareness that God's activity swirls all around us as God's will sustains all that is in existence. Every moment of every day is thick with opportunity for communion. Let that sink in; it means an end to boredom and an opening of life to the infinite and constant possibilities of grace. Our prayer amounts to the imploring request that God would teach us to live an entirely different way, so that we would walk by faith and not by sight (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). What a beautiful possibility that we could live with eyes of faith! Our longing is to become so profoundly aware of God that we might recognize in all things—the good, the bad, the sweet, and the burdensome—some opportunity to respond to and cooperate with the unfolding will of God.

It is simply true that God comes to us throughout each day, in our duties and undertakings. He comes to the door of our hearts to be with us. Christ's promise is this: "If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." (Rv 3:20). It is a promise almost too beautiful to bear that the God of the universe invites us into such an intimate

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
TUESDAY

SETTLE YOURSELF IN SOLITUDE,
AND YOU WILL ENCOUNTER GOD
IN YOURSELF.

ST. TERESA OF ÁVILA