

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 2:1-5
Ps 122:1-9
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44

Monday November 28

Isaiah 4:2-6
Ps 122:1-9
Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday November 29

Isaiah 11:1-10
Ps 72:1-2,7-8,12-13,17
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday November 30

St. Andrew

Romans 10:9-18
Ps 19:8,9,10,11
Matthew 4:18-22

Thursday December 1

Isaiah 26:1-6
Ps 118:1,8-9,19-21,25-27
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday December 2

Isaiah 29:17-24
Ps 27:1,4,13-14
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday December 3

St. Francis Xavier

Isaiah 30:19-21,23-26
Ps 147:1-6
Matthew 9:35--10:1,5-8

Hope is the theme of the First Sunday of Advent. Isaiah describes a future in which all is well because (1) God is recognized as the highest authority and (2) obeying him is the people's highest priority.

This vision gave great hope to the oppressed Israelites. Today if we look at this as a description of heaven, it gives great hope to us, too. When we die, "terms" will be "imposed" upon us (i.e., purgatory) because we did not stay entirely on the paths of God, but we will be living in the light of the Lord after death and there will be no more wars to battle.

Knowing that this is our future, we can look at our present trials as preparations for heaven. The weapons that we use now to defeat and overcome the powers of darkness can be used as plowshares for enriching our soil (our earthly life), bringing us into new growth and producing a harvest in ministry. Sufferings that are turned into ministries to help others make hardships very valuable.

Although Isaiah was speaking of the coming of the world's Messiah through the Jews, these verses remind us that when we respect God's authority and make imitating Christ our highest priority, all is well for us. Our battles against evil aren't over yet, but Jesus has already won the victory for us. Our hope is not based on a wish for peace; our hope comes from the reality of what Jesus has already done and what he will do. So,



"let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord!" (Psalm 122).

The Gospel reading tells us that our hope is realized only if we stay awake and alert to the activities of Christ. What are you despairing about? Despair and worry are merely distractions that make us forget that Christ has already won the battle. If we stay alert to the presence of Christ, recognizing his authority and following his ways, we live in hope – not wishful thinking, but a hope that's based firmly on reality.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. What are you despairing about?
2. What would it take for you to feel hopeful? In what way do you need Jesus to come to you now? What can you do to become more aware of his presence at your side?
3. How do you find hope in difficulties?
4. Describe a time when you nearly lost all hope. How did Jesus rescue you from this?