FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent begins in the dark, which can feel familiar to those who love someone struggling with addiction. We may not know what the next phone call will bring or whether the person we care about is moving toward help or further away from it. Family recovery asks us to live with uncertainty without allowing fear to direct every decision.

As we approach the season of Advent, this Sunday's first reading gives voice to that longing. Isaiah cries out, *"Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down"* (Isaiah 63:19). He does not pretend that everything is well, yet he remembers who God is: *"We are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands"* (Isaiah 64:7). Advent holds honesty and hope together. We can name the pain of our situation while trusting that God is still at work.

This movement reflects Step Two. After admitting that we are powerless over another person's addiction and that our own lives have become unmanageable, we come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. For family members and friends, sanity includes recognizing what belongs to us and what does not. We cannot create willingness in another person, but we can become willing to receive help for ourselves.

Fear can keep us living far ahead of the present moment. We imagine another relapse or brace for the next crisis. At other times, guilt pulls us backward as we replay conversations and wonder what we should have done differently. Living one day at a time brings us back to the only place where we can respond faithfully: today.

Sunday's gospel gives this practice a deeper meaning. Jesus says, *"Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come"* (Mark 13:33). He is not asking us to monitor another person or remain on edge. He is asking us to stay awake to God and faithful to the work entrusted to us.

Spiritual watchfulness is different from hypervigilance. Hypervigilance studies another person's behavior in an attempt to feel safe. Spiritual alertness helps us notice when fear is pulling us toward control and then return to prayer, fellowship, or a healthy boundary. The goal is not to predict what someone else will do. It is to remain available to God and responsible for our own recovery. This kind of waiting is not passive. We still speak truth, keep necessary boundaries, and seek guidance when a situation requires action. That distinction protects both love and recovery.

Saint Paul reminds us that we are not waiting empty-handed. He tells the Corinthians, *"You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 1:7). God has already given us grace for this day. We have the wisdom of others who have walked this path and a fellowship that can help us sort out what is ours to carry.

Paul then gives us the foundation beneath hope: *"God is faithful"* (1 Corinthians 1:9). Our peace does not depend on perfect boundaries or on another person making the choices we want. It rests in God, who continues shaping us while the larger story remains unresolved.

Jesus does not ask us to know what tomorrow will bring. He asks us to remain present to Him and faithful to what belongs to us today. Advent reminds us that darkness is not evidence of God's absence. Christ is coming, grace is already active, and God remains faithful while we wait. Family recovery gives us a way to live that hope without losing ourselves in someone else's journey.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How are fear about another person's future and regret over how you have handled things in the past pulling you away from the grace available today?
- How has Step Two, fellowship, or prayer helped you recover hope when someone you love remained unwilling or uncertain?
- What boundary or daily practice helps you stay spiritually attentive without monitoring another person's recovery?

ADVENT MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Isaiah 63:16b–17, 19b; 64:2–7
RESP. PS. Psalm 80:2–3, 15–16, 18–19
SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 1:3–9
GOSPEL Mark 13:33–37

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