FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Advent begins in the dark. Before the Church celebrates the light of Christ's birth, she gives voice to people who know they have wandered and need God to come near. Recovery brings us to a similar place. We stop pretending that our own efforts are enough and become willing to hope that God can restore what we cannot repair by ourselves.

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 hide Israel's failure or soften the truth about how far the people have strayed. At the same time, 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 begins with both honesty and hope. We acknowledge our condition and place ourselves again in God's hands.

This movement reflects Step Two. After admitting our powerlessness, we come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. That belief does not require us to understand how recovery will unfold. It asks us to become willing to trust that God can still act, even when the future remains unclear.

Many of us know what it is like to live too far ahead of the present moment. Fear carries us into tomorrow, while shame pulls us back into yesterday. We imagine consequences that have not happened or replay decisions that cannot be changed. Living one day at a time brings us back to the only place where we can meet God and take faithful action: today. That daily return is itself an act of faith.

Sunday's gospel gives this practice a deeper meaning. Jesus tells His disciples, *"Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come"* (Mark 13:33). He describes a master who leaves each servant with work to do and tells the gatekeeper to remain awake. Jesus is not asking us to predict the future or live in constant alarm. He is asking us to remain present and faithful while we wait.

This kind of watchfulness is different from anxiety. Anxiety tries to control what may happen. Spiritual alertness notices what God is asking now. It may mean recognizing that isolation is beginning to return or keeping a commitment to prayer when nothing feels urgent. The goal is not to do everything at once. It is to stay available.

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 fellowship, the wisdom of the Steps, and the sacramental life of the Church. We do not need enough strength for the entire future. We need to receive what God is providing now.

Paul then gives us the foundation beneath our hope: *"God is faithful"* (1 Corinthians 1:9). Our recovery does not depend on perfect vigilance or flawless spiritual discipline. It rests on the faithfulness of God, who continues shaping us even when the work feels slow.

Jesus does not ask us to know when He will come or to control what lies ahead. He asks us to remain awake to His presence and faithful to the work entrusted 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. Recovery gives us a way to live that hope one day at a time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How are fear of the future or regret about the past making it difficult for you to remain present to God today?
- How has Step Two, or the faith of someone else in recovery, helped you recover hope when you could not see the path ahead?
- What daily practice helps you remain spiritually attentive without becoming anxious about tomorrow?

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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