



HORIZON OF HOPE

The First
Sunday

You Do Not Know the Time

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus tells his disciples to “Be watchful! Be alert!” because they do not know when the Lord will come. As we begin the season of Advent, we are reminded that we, too, must be watchful as we wait for the coming of the Lord.

“The season of Advent, which we begin again today, restores this horizon of hope, a hope which does not disappoint because it is founded on God’s Word. A hope which does not disappoint, simply because the Lord never disappoints! He is faithful!”

— Pope Francis, Angelus, December 1, 2013



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There are two temptations behind today’s Gospel. The first is to presume that since we have been waiting for so long the Second Coming won’t be anytime soon and that we have more than enough time to get ready. The other is to assume the Second Coming is imminent and to live in fearful predictions of the end of days. But neither of these is the Catholic position. As Catholics, we use the opportunities of our daily lives to grow in our relationship with God, while still being aware that this world is not our final home. The season of Advent calls us to live in the present while looking forward to the future. We both celebrate the season of waiting while anticipating the happiness of Christmas.

POINTS TO PONDER

- What am I waiting for this Advent?
- How can I make this Advent season a new beginning?
- How can I pay full attention to the grace of the present, while remembering the past and anticipating the future?



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HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION

The Immaculate Conception

During the First Week of Advent this year we celebrate one of the holy days of obligation — the Immaculate Conception on December 8. Commemorating Mary’s conception without the stain of original sin, this feast is an ideal time to renew our baptismal promises — and remember that through our baptism we are brought into new life with Christ.

FAMILY FOCUS Advent Wreath

An Advent wreath customarily has three purple candles, symbolizing penance and waiting, and one pink candle (for the third Sunday) representing hope. This year, consider adding a different-colored pillar candle in the center of the ring each week. On the first week, use a blue candle for the Old Testament prophets who heralded the coming of the Messiah. On the second Sunday, place a white candle for the angel Gabriel who announced the virgin birth. On the third Sunday, use a green candle for the shepherds who were watching their flocks in the field. Then, on the last Sunday, light a gold candle for the Magi who brought their precious gifts to the Christ child.



Catechism CONNECTION

“When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming (cf. *Rev* 22:17). By celebrating the precursor’s birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: ‘He must increase, but I must decrease (*Jn* 3:30).’” — *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 524

HEROES OF HOPE

SAINT JUAN DIEGO

Saint Juan Diego never expected to see the Virgin Mary as he walked the 15 miles to attend Mass on December 9, 1531. Much to his shock, a beautiful young woman dressed like an Aztec princess appeared to him and, speaking in his own language, told him to go to the bishop and request that a chapel be built on the hill where she was standing. When the bishop resisted, the young woman gave Juan Diego a sign — roses blooming in winter — which he gathered into his *tilma*, a long cloak. When he presented them to the bishop, an image of Our Lady miraculously appeared on the *tilma*. The image, which has not deteriorated over the centuries, is called Our Lady of Guadalupe. *Saint Juan Diego, pray for us!*



Feast Day:
December 9

ADVENT PRAYER Come, O Lord!

“For they see directly, before their eyes, the Lord’s return to Zion.” — Isaiah 52:8

Lord, help us to wait with patience and anticipation, not caught up in the rush of the season, but resting in your ever-present love.