THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT – A

November 30 - December 6, 2025

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Sun. Nov. 30 — The First Sunday of Advent

THE COMING OF CHRIST IN US

A Reflection by St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Mon. Dec. 1 — Monday of the 1st Week of Advent

Our God Teaches Us Gentleness

A Reflection by Rev. James Kirk

Tues. 2 — Tuesday of the 1st Week of Advent

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADVENT (Part 1)

From a Talk by Fr Vincent Ryan OSB

Wed. 3 — Memorial of St. Francis Xavier

THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE GOSPEL

A Reflection from a letter by St. Francis Xavier

Thurs. 4 — Thursday of the 1st Week of Advent

PUTTING ON CHRIST

Developed from a homily by St. Gregory Nazianzen

Fri. 5 — Friday of the 1st Week of Advent

THE COMING OF CHRIST & OF THE ANTI-CHRIST

A Reflection by Bishop Paschal Radbert

Sat. 6 — Saturday of the 1st Week of Advent

ON THE SEASON OF ADVENT

From the Pastoral Letters of St Charles Borromeo

Sunday

THE COMING OF CHRIST IN US

A Reflection by St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Almost everything relating to our Lord Jesus Christ takes place in two ways. His begetting provides one example. He was begotten by the Heavenly Father before all ages, but he was also born of the Virgin Mary at the end of the ages. Again, when he comes down from heaven, he first does it in obscurity, but when he comes again, it will be in the sight of all humankind. When he first came, he was wrapped in swaddling clothes, but when he comes the second time, he will "clothe himself in light as in a garment". First, he endured the Cross and shame, but soon he will come again, attended by hosts of angels.

We must not let our hearts rest in Christ's first coming. We must be full of longing for him to return. "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" This is a cry appropriate for both comings. Therefore, it is also a motto by which we must live by, passing from our faith in his first coming into exultation in his second.

When he first came, Christ was judged and condemned. His second coming will bring true justice to those who were formerly his judges. "These things you did to me, and I was silent." That is what he will say to all when he comes again as judge. He will ask us to look at him and remember what he did among us and then ask whether we have imitated him. As he loved us, did we love one another?

Recall the words of the prophet Malachi: "And suddenly the Lord whom you seek will enter his temple. Look, he is coming, the all-powerful Lord! Who can endure the day of his Coming? Who can remain standing when he appears? His coming will be that of the fire which refines ores, or like the cleansing by the bleach of a fuller." But we need to listen to these words together, what we have heard from St. Paul: "The grace of God, our Savior, has appeared to all humankind. It teaches us that we must not go on living without any thought of God but must renounce all evil desires and practice self-control. While we are in this world, we should live devout and upright lives and wait for the fulfillment of our blessed hope of the coming of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!"

The Creed we recite reminds us that Christ has ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father, and then that he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. He judges simply by asking us to compare our lives and conduct with his own and that of his apostles and holy ones. That means our task is to live to be prepared for his second coming. The more we think of the first coming at Bethlehem, the more we must look forward to his coming again, and the harder we must work to prepare ourselves for that second coming. It is an easy thing to do. Walk in Christ's grace by loving one another and all those in need, as Christ has loved and still loves you. This is how Christ comes into you to reveal himself to others. As you welcome him into your heart and soul, you prepare and help others prepare, for his coming in glory as judge.

Monday

OUR GOD TEACHES US GENTLENESS

A Reflection by Rev. James Kirk

Throughout Advent, we hear a great deal from Isaiah. This Sunday, we heard from Third Isaiah, a prophet speaking to those who had suffered the loss of all they had and were exiled. Now, they had been led back to Israel and, face the task of building a new life, and it must be different from the previous one. The prophet tells them not to attempt to control things but to gently cultivate God's actual gifts, like one cultivates land. It is a relationship that God has given. It is also a time to learn how to develop mutual respect and understanding. Isaiah's is a pastoral vision.

All are called to build a community eager to know God's will and do it. God plans that we flourish and become able to share good with others. What steps need to be taken for this to happen? We must not try to force everyone and everything to fit into some scheme or pattern we have imagined, thinking it will make life what we want it to be. But what does God want it to be? We are to learn to cultivate gently what God has given us, not only in fact but in hope. Basically, that is the only way we can have an abundant life. God doesn't overpower us or force us. God calls us gently and asks us to do the same for one another.

Throughout our days, can't we watch for opportunities to cultivate relationships, recognizing that we can't make good things happen by controlling or dominating? This difference in this approach becomes obvious in its results. Recall the Lord's saying: By your fruits you will know them.

Cultivation of relationships requires reconciliation. This amounts to cultivating a Christ-like way of viewing others and what they have or are doing. It draws us to seek and then develop new insights into one another and how each views and deals with life and its challenges.

Third Isaiah's ultimate vision was of Zion as a place for what we call mountain-top experiences. He sees all peoples being drawn to Zion as the Lord's chosen dwelling place, the place where God will reveal to all a way to peace and plenty. He sees this new order of things coming to all through the faith of Israel. It includes a new way for Israel to relate to the Gentile world, and it will lead that world to relate to Israel in a new way. All will learn to walk by God's spirit.

That means seeing oneself and one's life in a new way. After all, the old ways haven't brought the good life they were supposed to bring. Everyone was trying to get control, and they frustrated each other. Now we can turn to the Lord and learn to gently cultivate what God has actually given us – in giving us a place to live and a community with which to live and to work at helping all open themselves to share the good that comes only from God.

Tuesday

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADVENT (Part 1)

From a talk by Fr Vincent Ryan OSB

When the feast of the Nativity was introduced to Rome in the early years of the fourth century, it was celebrated as a simple memorial and was not preceded by a time of preparation. It was not until about the middle of the sixth century, by which time Christmas had become a major solemnity almost on a par with Easter, that the Roman Advent made its appearance.

It is outside of Rome, especially in Spain and Gaul, that the earliest form of Advent appears. The Council of Saragossa in Spain in 380 refers to three weeks of preparation extending from 17th of December to the feast of the Epiphany. It urges the faithful to be assiduous in attending daily mass during this time. The Epiphany, like Easter, was a time for the conferring of baptism, which suggests that the weeks of preparation were conceived mainly in function of the sacrament of initiation. But for all the faithful, this was a time of prayer, ascetic effort, and assembly in church.

The Roman church did not see the need for a prolonged pre-Christmas fast, as existed in Spain and Gaul. When the season of Advent eventually appeared, it was liturgical rather than ascetical in character. From the start, it was directly oriented to Christmas, not Epiphany, and took its whole meaning from that feast. It had no connection with baptism.

As it developed, the primitive form of the Roman Advent had six weeks before Christmas. This was the practice of some other churches, and is still a feature of the Ambrosian rite in Milan. It was during the pontificate of Pope St. Gregory the Great that the number of weeks was reduced to four, and that has remained ever since. The great pontiff curtailed it because he judged it inappropriate that Advent should have the same duration as Lent.

In its earliest form, Advent was basically a preparation for Christmas. It focused on the liturgical commemoration of Christ's birth. Within a fairly short time, however, it acquired an eschatological character. From the beginning of the seventh century, Advent was understood not only as a time of waiting and preparation for Christmas but also as a time of waiting and expectancy for the return of Christ in glory. In other Western churches, this eschatological thrust became even more pronounced. Through the influence of the preaching of the Irish missionary monks, with their emphasis on the coming of the Lord in judgement and the need to do penance, the notion of Advent as a time of joyful waiting tended to be obscured.

Wednesday

THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE GOSPEL

A Reflection from a letter by St. Francis Xavier

Francis Mancias and I are now living among the Christians of Comorin. They are very numerous and increase largely every day. When I first came, I asked them if they knew anything about our Lord Jesus Christ. But when I came to speak of the articles of faith in detail and asked them what they thought of these and what more they now believed than they had before they became Christians, they could only reply that they knew they were Christians. As they cannot speak Portuguese, they know little of the mysteries and precepts of our holy religion.

I picked out the most intelligent and well-read among them and then sought out, with the greatest diligence, persons who knew both Castilian and Malabar. We held meetings for several days, and by our joint efforts and with infinite difficulty, we translated the Catechism into Malabar. This I learned by heart, and then I began to go through all the villages of the coast, calling around me by the sound of a bell as many as I could, children and adults. I assembled them twice a day and taught them the Christian doctrine. Thus, in a month's time, the children had it well by heart. And all that time I kept telling them to go on teaching in their turn whatever they had learned, especially to their parents, family, and neighbors.

Every Sunday, I collect them all, men and women and children, in the church. They come with great readiness and with a great desire for instruction. Then, in the hearing of all, I begin by calling on the name of the Most Holy Trinity—Father and Son and Holy Spirit—and I recite aloud the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Creed, all in the language of that country. They all follow me in the same words and delight in this. Then I repeat the Creed by myself, dwelling upon each article singly. Then I ask them about each article, whether they believed it unhesitatingly. All, with a loud voice and with their hands crossed over their breasts, professed aloud that they truly believe it. I take care to have them repeat the Creed more often than the other prayers. I tell them that those who think all that is contained in the creed are Christians.

After the Creed, I go on to the commandments, teaching that the Christian law is contained in these ten precepts and that everyone who observes them all faithfully is a good and true Christian and is certain of eternal salvation. I teach that, on the other hand, whoever neglects a single one of them is a bad Christian and will be cast into hell unless truly repentant of the sin committed.

Converts and unbelievers alike are astonished at all this in a way that shows them the holiness of the Christian law, its perfect consistency with itself, and its agreement with reason. Then I recite the principal prayers and go back to the Creed with a short hymn. As soon as I have recited the first article, I sing in their language, "Jesus, Son of the Living God, grant us the grace to believe firmly this first article of your faith, and grant that we may obtain this faith from you as we offer you this prayer that you yourself have taught us."

Thus, I accustom them to ask for these graces using the ordinary prayers of the Church. I tell them at the same time that if they obtain them, they will have all the other things they can wish for in greater abundance than they know how to ask for. I make them all, particularly those who are to be baptized, repeat the form of general confession. Last of all, I admit them, thus prepared, to baptism.

Thursday

PUTTING ON CHRIST

A Reflection developed from a homily by St. Gregory Nazianzen

The Word of God existed from all eternity as invisible, incomprehensible, incorporeal, the beginning from the Beginning, light from Light, and the source of all life and immortality. The Son is the impress of the Divine Archetype, the Permanent Seal and Perfect Image of the Heavenly Father. For us, the Son is the revelation of the Father, the very Word of God. What do you think, then, when you are told that the Son clothes himself in a human body with a human soul and does this for the sake of my body and soul? What do you think when you are told that the Son now wishes to clothe himself in your body and soul, in you?

God calls you to accept being another Christ freely. The Son became one of us in Jesus Christ. He did this to cleanse us, just as he had purified the Virgin in advance of becoming her child. He who is God comes forth with his humanity as a single being formed of two natures, bestowing divine nature and receiving a human nature. In yet another way, God becomes one with us by giving us the divine nature. It is not done in the same way as in Christ Jesus, but it is truly and really done. He who would enrich you endlessly becomes poor in you, and as poor and wretched as you are. He who is full empties himself of the fullness that you may share in his plenitude. How can we explain this wealth of divine goodness? Can we understand this mystery and preserve our participation in it?

The humanity taken by God sanctifies humankind. This overpowers all the strength of mankind's enemy and frees us. Freed, we are led back to God in a way endlessly richer than what we had by creation. The Son shows us obedience to God in all things, and so through his mediation, shows us the way to complete union with God. All of this happens as we walk, hour by hour and day by day, in Christ. How can this happen freely, as God wills it to happen, if we do not learn to think of ourselves as being Christ enfleshed in us?

When you do an act of love, do you realize that Christ is doing it in, with and through you? When you think of yourself, do you reflect that you are Christ, not simply for yourself but for others? Christ becomes you, leading you to share in his works of love; thus, God's salvation comes to those you meet and touch by your words and deeds of love.

The humanity of God sanctifies humankind. The Heavenly Father ordains this. God intends to overpower every foe by the force of this love and through the mediation of the Son, continued through the Son living in you. But this involves leading you and all back to the Heavenly Father even as prodigals or as lost sheep. The Good Shepherd lays down his own life for the flock. Jesus seeks the straying, lifts them to his shoulders, the same ones that bore the wood of the Cross, and carries them all the way to heaven.

God decreed that He would become human and be put to death to give life to us all. We have been put to death with Christ to be purified. Since we have died and been raised with Him, we are also to have a share in the same Glory. What a wonderful gift we are given to live each day of our lives.

Friday

THE COMING OF CHRIST & OF THE ANTI-CHRIST

A Reflection by Bishop Paschal Radbert

"Watch, for you don't know the day nor the hour!" These words are directed to the entire human race, but Christ speaks them to us as to his special disciples. This is true for many of the things we hear in Scripture. The sayings apply to all, because all will be judged on the Last Day, but we must prepare for that day personally. Think of how necessary it is that the day of our death find us in the state in which we want to present ourselves before Christ when he comes again to judge.

Everyone ought to prepare for that Day. This means that everyone ought to take great care not to be led astray. If that happens, we may forget our preparation for facing our judge, and That Day may find us unprepared. Remember that the apostles weren't misled into expecting the Lord to return in their own lifetime, and yet they took every sort of care not to be drawn away from the right path. They kept watch and they put into practice all the Master's precepts, and they did this in such a way that they would be found ready when he comes again.

We see now the reason why we must pay careful attention to the double nature of Christ's coming. We think of his coming again as judge on the last day, and we think of his daily coming to each person's conscience and life. Christ comes to us now so that his future coming may find us prepared. What good would it do me to know about the Day of Judgment if I lived to burden my conscience with sin? There is no profit in knowing that the Lord will come, or when the Lord will come, unless the Lord comes to establish a dwelling place in my conscience and soul, and yours!

Christ lives and speaks in me, and I live in him. This is already true. I have already died to the world and can say, "The world has been crucified to me and I to the world". If that is already true, his final coming will only bring me the greatest of presents. But the Lord has also warned us: "Many will come in my name", and obviously, they won't be me! Only the Anti-Christ and those who belong to him will do this. In the Gospels, you never find the Lord declaring, "I am the Christ!" He came to reveal the Heavenly Father and to teach us to live as Our Father lives.

The Anti-Christ and his members never lead us to the Heavenly Father. They don't have the words of wisdom or of Christ. They don't have the word of truth, nor do they live the truth. Those who do the works of the Heavenly Father speak "Christ" in a voice that is louder than a thousand ordinary tongues can say. Christ's miracles and teaching were enough to reveal him to his first disciples. Those who shout out teachings that are neither those of the Father nor of Christ belong to the Anti-Christ. Those who do the works of love proclaim Christ in an even more attention-getting way.

Who is Christ? Christ is the Father's love-giving self for others and looking only to praise God in all things. Those who have neither God-glorifying deeds nor God-praising doctrine surely do not come from God. We show we belong to Christ when we do Christ-like deeds of love and comfort, and thereby revealing divine love. That is how one prepares for Christ's second coming. When you come to be judged before Christ, will you be like a mirror of your judge? If not, you will be revealed as an anti-Christ.

Saturday

ON THE SEASON OF ADVENT

From the Pastoral Letters of St Charles Borromeo

The season of Advent is one of particular importance. As the Holy Spirit says, it is the time of the Lord's favor, the day of salvation, peace, and reconciliation. It is a sacred season. The patriarchs and prophets longed, and prayed, and yearned with all their hearts for this time. That just man Simeon, at long last, saw this time, and his joy was boundless. And the Church has always specially kept this season. So, we too must continue to celebrate it fittingly, giving praise and thanks to the eternal Father for the mercy he has shown us in this mystery of the coming of his Only-begotten Son.

The Father sent his Son out of his immeasurable love for us sinners. He sent him to free us from the tyrannical power of the devil, to invite us to heaven, and lead us into its innermost sanctuary. He was sent to show us truth itself, to teach us how we should live, to share with us the source of all goodness, to enrich us with the measure of his grace. Finally, he was sent to make us sons and daughters of the Father and heirs to eternal life.

The Church calls this mystery to mind each year to stir us to remember the great love God has shown us. The commemoration teaches us that our Savior came not only for the benefit of the people of his own time. His goodness is still there for us to share in. But, for our part, through faith and the sacraments, we must lay hold of the grace he won for us and live by it in obedience to him.

The Church wants us to understand, that as he came into the world in the flesh, so now, if we remove all barriers, he is ready to go to us again at any moment, to make his home spiritually within us in all his grace.

Like a devoted mother, keenly concerned for our salvation, the Church uses the rites of this Advent season, its hymns, songs, and other utterances of the Holy Spirit to teach us a lesson. She shows us how to receive this great gift of God with thankfulness and how to be enriched by its possession. She teaches us that our hearts should be as prepared now for the coming of Christ into the world as if he were still to come.