

REFLECTION FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – 2020

Isaiah 63:16-17. 64: 1 3-8.

Psalms 79:2-3.15-16.18-19

Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

Opening prayer: Loving God, we come to you at the beginning of another church year asking that you will bless us and guide us on our journey. This has been a year like no other in our memories. We know that you have been with us each day and we are just as sure that you will continue to be with us. Please help each one of us to stay close to you so that we can be more attentive to your voice and more loving in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Reflection: Next Sunday marks the start of a new liturgical year, Year B, and this year the Gospels will come from Mark's account of Jesus' life on earth. Two Advent themes are dealt with in the next two Sundays. For next Sunday the Gospel theme will be about the Lord's coming.

In the first reading from Isaiah the Jewish people were in exile in Babylon and longing to return to their own country. They were asking God to allow them to return so that they could settle again in their country and rebuild the temple which had been destroyed. Isaiah looks back to a time when God was looked upon as Israel's Redeemer and now these same people feel abandoned. They wonder if God is angry with them. Like us, these people were accustomed to finding God, not in the happy places, but in the dark places when things were going wrong. This is when we pray most earnestly. It's a bit like the Advent candle which shows up best in the dark. God is always with us. He has promised never to leave us.

The Psalm continues the theme of asking for God's protection. "Oh God, bring us back, let your face shine on us and we shall be saved." At this time of Advent, it could be our prayer as well. It is a time of turning our lives back to full attention to God who saves us.

The passage from Corinthians tells us just how we can be "enriched" and find ways that help us to be strong in order to witness to Christ and avail ourselves of the gifts of the Spirit. In this way we will remain firm, steady and blameless until the Lord comes for us.

The Gospel is taken from the part of Mark's Gospel just before the account of Jesus' passion and death. His advice is to be watchful because we never know when we will be called. The Christians, at the time this Gospel passage was written, were living under threat of persecution and they were being warned of difficult times ahead.

We too are living in difficult times, never quite sure of what is coming next. So, our preparation for Christmas is also a time when we can rededicate ourselves to God. In good times and in difficult times we can trust that God is there for us.

Where can I be a source of light today?

Who brings the light of Christ into my life?

Closing prayer: Faithful God, we ask your blessing as we embark on our Advent journey. Please help us to make moving closer to you be a priority in our lives as the feast of Christmas moves closer. Help us celebrate Jesus' birth simply, so that we can devote our attention to what really matters. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.