

First Sunday of Advent – December 3, 2017 – Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Scripture Reading: IS 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2b-7

You, LORD, are our father,
our redeemer you are named forever.
Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways,
and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?
Return for the sake of your servants,
the tribes of your heritage.
Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
with the mountains quaking before you,
while you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope
for, such as they had not heard of from of old.
No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but
you doing such deeds for those who wait for him.
Would that you might meet us doing right,
that we were mindful of you in our ways!
Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful;
all of us have become like unclean people,
all our good deeds are like polluted rags;
we have all withered like leaves,
and our guilt carries us away like the wind.
There is none who calls upon your name,
who rouses himself to cling to you;
for you have hidden your face from us
and have delivered us up to our guilt.
Yet, O LORD, you are our father;
we are the clay and you the potter:
we are all the work of your hands.

Psalms: Ps 79, 2ac, 3b; 15-16; 18-19

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face
and we shall be saved.**

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power,
and come to save us. **(R)**

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong. **(R)**

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.
Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name. **(R)**

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:3-9

Brothers and sisters:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account
for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus,
that in him you were enriched in every way,
with all discourse and all knowledge,
as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you,
so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift
as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on
the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful,
and by him you were called to fellowship with his
Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel: Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples:
"Be watchful! Be alert!
You do not know when the time will come.
It is like a man traveling abroad.
He leaves home and places his servants in charge,
each with his own work,
and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.
Watch, therefore;
you do not know when the Lord of the house is
coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight,
or at cockcrow, or in the morning.
May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.
What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

The prophet Isaiah tells us that God will surely reward those who wait for him: "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who works for those who wait for him" (Isaiah 64:3). Our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, entrusts us with his gifts and grace and he expects to be ready for action and prepared for the future. Our call is not only to believe, but to watch; not only to love, but to watch; not only to obey, but to watch! What are we to watch for? The greatest event to come --the return of our Master and Lord Jesus Christ when he comes again in glory at the end of the age. The kind of watching our Lord has in mind is not a passive "wait and see what happens" approach to life. The Lord urges us to vigilance and to active prayer that his "kingdom may come" and his "will be done on earth as it is in heaven". We are not only to watch *for* Christ, but to watch *with* Christ. The Lord wants us to have our hearts and minds fixed on him and his word. He wants us to be ready for his action and grace in our lives and in our world. Those who "wait" for the Lord will not be disappointed. He will surely come with his grace and saving help. Do you watch for the Lord's action in your life with expectant faith and with joyful hope?

"Lord, awaken my heart and mind to receive your word and to prepare for your coming again. Free me from complacency, from the grip of sin and worldliness, and from attachments to things which pass away. May I always be eager to receive your word and be ready to meet you when you come again."

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. An unexpected visit can be a pleasant surprise. How have you recognized God in your everyday life?
2. Are you fully present as you go about your everyday life? How can you be more present to the gift of every moment given to you by our loving God?
3. This time of your life will never come again. How do you use your time and your freedom? What opportunities do you have to good deeds for others?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

1. Putting aside other activity for at least 30 minutes, listen to an entire playlist of inspirational music or spend time in nature, Adoration or pray the Rosary—not as back ground, however, as an event in itself. Before you go on to your next regular task, thank God for your experience.
2. Listen as attentively as possible to the next person who comes to talk with you. Talk time in active listening with that person. Before you respond, thank God for something good you just heard and for the person who has shared it with you. Try to make this exercise a part of your life.
3. Commit as a group to assist our "Hearts & Hands Ministry" by donating Christmas food to the needs of people in our neighborhood. Participate in the "Angel Tree" program. Experience as a group or with your family an OLPH Posada.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

ALL: Jesus our brother, thank you for this time together to share our lives. Help us to keep our hearts focused on you at all times. Guide us to use the time and freedom you have given us with humility and wisdom as we strive to bring your love to others. In your name we pray. Amen!