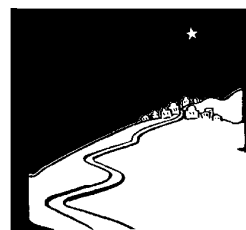


1st Sunday of Advent B



*We are the clay, you are the potter,
we are all the work of your hand. (Is 64:7)*

First Reading

Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1.3-8

You, Lord, yourself are our Father, Our Redeemer is your ancient name. Why, Lord, leave us to stray from your ways and harden our hearts against fearing you? Return, for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your inheritance. Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down – at your Presence the mountains would melt. No ear has heard, no eye has seen any god but you act like this for those who trust him. You guide those who act with integrity and keep your ways in mind. You were angry when we were sinners; we had long been rebels against you. We were all like men unclean, all that integrity of ours like filthy clothing. We have all withered like leaves and our sins blew us away like the wind. No one invoked your name or roused himself to catch hold of you. For you hid your face from us and gave us up to the power of our sins. And yet, Lord, you are our Father; we the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hand.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ send you grace and peace. I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways, especially in your teachers and preachers; the witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed; and he will keep you steady and without blame until the last day, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, because God by calling you has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ; and God is faithful.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!"

Meditation

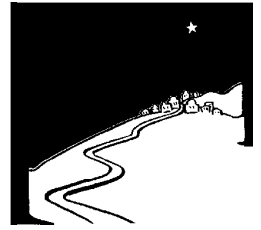
"Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down..." Once again, at the beginning of Advent, this cry rises to God, borne up by the certainty of a kingdom already among us but not yet completed. For our God is a God who comes: "He who was, and who is, and who is to come!" (Rv 4:8)

Once again, we must situate ourselves properly before this mystery which draws near. It would be useless to speculate about the moment of the final manifestation of the Lord. That is an old temptation to which troubled societies regularly succumb. Even today many sects set themselves up as prophets of doom. It is not the date of the Parousia but its character which must concern us. It will pronounce judgment on all of history and on our personal lives. In the face of this coming of the Son of Man which no one can foresee or prevent, in the face of this long vigil through the night of this world, it is best to remain always on the alert, to be aware of our responsibility toward the present, and to recognize the eternal significance of every moment.

Paul calls the vigilant Christian to give thanks without ceasing. Thanksgiving is not an expression of smug complacency. With this awareness of what we are not yet and do not yet do, we turn toward the One who is the beginning and the end of all things. We renounce what delays and announce what hastens his coming. Then, like a thorn in the world's flesh we become a goad to the world's vigilance, triumphing over sleep and stirring up hope: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rv 22:20).

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Gospel

Mark 13:24-37

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days, after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and

the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.

Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that he is near, at the very gates. I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father.

Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!"

Meditation

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