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Uniting Word & World

For Sunday, November 29, 2015

The Greatest Solace

## This Sunday's Scripture Readings

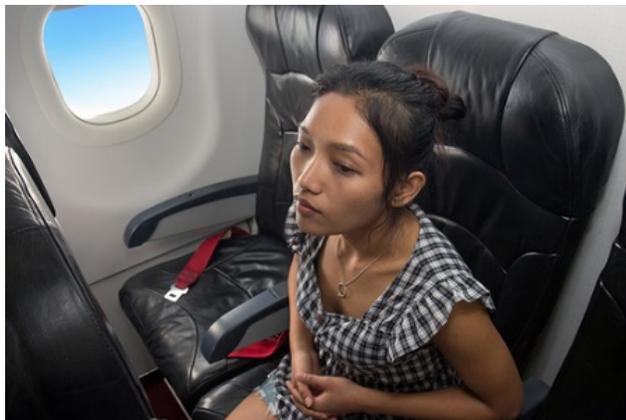
1st Sunday of Advent

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/112915.cfm>

Jeremiah 33:14-16

1 Thessalonians 3:12—4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36



Advent is traditionally the time of anticipation, of breathless wonder and waiting. It's a season, right now, perfectly attuned to our times.

As I write this, [Belgium is anxious and on alert](#) for a possible terrorist attack. Presidential candidates are [stoking fears](#). Airlines are [on edge](#) again and [again](#).

I can't help but think the Gospel we encounter this Sunday could speak to us here and now:

"Be vigilant at all times  
and pray that you have the strength  
to escape the tribulations that are imminent  
and to stand before the Son of Man."

Yet, almost as a soothing counterpoint, comes this heartfelt message of hope from St. Paul:

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love  
for one another and for all,  
just as we have for you,  
so as to strengthen your hearts.

The good people of Thessalonica to whom Paul was writing had their own troubles, and their own age of anxiety; they waited with joyful hope for Christ's imminent return, while struggling to keep the young Christian faith alive in a time of persecution. Yet Paul's advice to them is a wisdom that transcends the ages: "increase and abound in love." In a time of uncertainty or even fear, the greatest solace, and greatest prescription, remains Christian love for one another.

So it could be for our time, too—and for the time of Advent. This season traditionally brings its added pressures and problems—Shopping! Baking! Family stress!—and the words from Paul can be a blessed balm. Don't flinch from love; increase and abound in it. Seek opportunities to grow in holiness. Put simply, "Conduct yourselves to please God." All else, really, is a distraction.

It's all a distraction that can turn our hearts toward fear and away from the true essence and meaning of this season: making ourselves ready to welcome Christ at Christmas. In these coming weeks, we need to keep our eyes on the prize—the presence of God in our world in the astonishing act of Incarnation, a gesture of humility and hope that transformed the world.

Of all the things we may find ourselves waiting for this Advent, that is really the only one that matters.

Dcn. Greg Kandra

## PRAYER

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Lord our God,  
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:  
he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,  
he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,  
he is the Savior of every nation.  
Lord God,  
let your blessing come upon us  
as we light the candles of this wreath.  
May the wreath and its light  
be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.  
May he come quickly and not delay.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

—*Blessing of an Advent Wreath from Catholic Household Blessings.*

## NOTICES

### RELIGIOUS FUND FOR RETIREMENT COLLECTION

The Retirement Fund for Religious provides support for thousands of elderly Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests. The national collection will be held in most US Catholic parishes the weekend of December 12–13, 2015. To learn more about the collection and download materials for the campaign, visit [www.RetiredReligious.org/resources/](http://www.RetiredReligious.org/resources/).

### ADVENT RESOURCES FROM THE USCCB

The USCCB will once again have an online daily calendar for the Advent–Christmas season. You will want to share this information with parish members, school and religious education staffs, and other interested parties. The online calendar can be found at: [www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/index.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/index.cfm). A PDF version of the calendar is also available: [www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/upload/advent-calendar.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/upload/advent-calendar.pdf).

### HOLY YEAR OF MERCY RESOURCES

The Holy Year of Mercy begins on December 8, 2015, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. For resources to help celebrate this Extraordinary Jubilee, visit the USCCB's resource page at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/jubilee-of-mercy/index.cfm>. Additional artwork is available to LPi customers on the Art & Media Portal [here](#).

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**Liturgical Publications Inc**

**2875 S. James Drive**

**New Berlin, WI 53151**

**(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469**

Send email address changes to:

**[lpiconnections@4LPi.com](mailto:lpiconnections@4LPi.com)**

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