



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

FIRST READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

A reading from Isaiah.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down; the mountains quaked at your presence.

⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.

⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.

But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.

⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.

We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

⁷There is no one who calls on your name
or attempts to take hold of you,
for you have hidden your face from us
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

FIRST READING *Isaiah = eye-ZAY-uh*

The text celebrates divine power as God's people have experienced it in the past. The heartfelt prayer of the text is that God's people may again know the benefits of that power, while admitting that they do not deserve such blessings. Help the assembly hear the deep longing of the people. Pay attention to the many wonderful images ("as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil"; "the mountains quaked at your presence"; "our iniquities, like the wind, take us away"). Paint them slowly and carefully enough so that the hearer has time to visualize and absorb them. Read half as fast as one might be initially inclined.

PSALMODY: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from First Corinthians.

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you
because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,
⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him,
in speech and knowledge of every kind
⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you
⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift
as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸He will also strengthen you to the end,
so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the partnership of his Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

SECOND READING

The author of 1 Corinthians assures the readers of this letter that they have what it takes to wait "for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ." This reading sounds the Advent theme of waiting and promises that God will sustain the faithful to the end of time. A significant pause between verses 3 and 4 will establish verse 3 as the salutation. Note that verses 4-7 are one complex sentence. Find the natural pause points that will make it most easily understandable, and take advantage of them. Make this an encouraging word by reminding those in the assembly that God is faithful and that we belong to the "partnership of his Son."

GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

The holy gospel according to Mark.

「Jesus said:」

²⁴“In those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶“Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’
with great power and glory.

²⁷Then he will send out the angels
and gather the elect from the four winds,
from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson:
as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves,
you know that summer is near.

²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place,
you know that he is near, at the very gates.

³⁰Truly I tell you,
this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.

³¹Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows,
neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father.

³³Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come.

³⁴It is like a man going on a journey,
when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work,
and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

³⁵Therefore, keep awake,
for you do not know when the master of the house will come,
in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn,

³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.

³⁷And what I say to you I say to all:
Keep awake.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

Even familiar texts require thoughtful preparation and rehearsal if they are to be read with clarity and conviction. The reader must struggle to determine our Lord’s meaning in sentences such as verse 30 (“Truly . . . this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place”) well in advance of repeating those words aloud. Each of the gospel’s paragraphs has a slightly different tone. The first is ominous. The second is instructive. The third is urgent. Varying the tone of each will enrich the texture of the word.