

The Parish at Prayer and Study

The First Week in Advent

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT (Ad Te Levavi)
Jeremiah 23:5–8; Romans 13:8–14; Matthew 21:1–9

The Lord Jesus Comes in Humility to Redeem Us

The new Church Year begins by focusing on the humble coming of our Lord. “Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey” (Matt. 21:5). Even as He was born in a lowly manger, so Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a beast of burden. For He bears the sin of the world. He is the Son of David riding to His enthronement on the cross, where He shows Himself to be “The LORD is our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:5–6). Our Lord still comes in great humility to deliver His righteousness to us in the Word and Sacraments. Before receiving Christ’s body and blood, we also sing, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matt. 21:9) And as we receive the Sacrament, we set our hearts on His return in glory, for “our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11).

TWO-YEAR SCRIPTURE READING PLAN

Mon: Gen. 1:1-2:25	Tues: Gen. 3:1-24	Wed: Gen. 4:1-6:8
Thurs: Gen. 6:9-8:22	Fri: Gen. 9:1-10:32	Sat: Gen. 11:1-12:9

DAILY THEMES FOR PRAYER

(The following suggestions may be used to establish a pattern of daily and weekly prayer. Christians pray not only for themselves, but for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people, according to their needs. These daily suggestions are meant to assist the Christian to that end, and to be a supplement to the Christian’s other daily prayers)

- Sun: For the joy of the resurrection among us; for the fruit of faith nourished by the Word and Sacraments.
- Mon: For faith to live in the promise of Holy Baptism; for one’s calling and daily work; for the unemployed; for the salvation and well-being of our neighbors; for schools, colleges, and seminaries; for good government and for peace.
- Tue: For deliverance against temptation and evil; for the addicted and despairing, the tortured and oppressed; for those struggling with sin.
- Wed: For marriage and family, that husbands and wives, parents and children live in ordered harmony according to the Word of God; for parents who must raise children alone; for our communities and neighborhoods.
- Thur: For the Church and her pastors; for teachers, deaconesses, and other church workers; for missionaries and for all who serve the Church; for fruitful and salutary use of the blessed Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood.
- Fri: For the preaching of the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the spread of His knowledge throughout the whole world; for the persecuted and oppressed; for the sick and dying (and all who have requested our prayers).
- Sat: For faithfulness to the end; for the renewal of those who are withering in the faith or have fallen away; for receptive hearts and minds to God’s Word on the Lord’s Day; for pastors and people as they prepare to administer and receive Christ’s Holy Gifts in the Divine Service.

COLLECT OF THE WEEK

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

HYMN OF THE WEEK: LSB 332 “Savior of the Nations, Come”

PSALM SCHEDULE

(From the “Table of Psalms for Daily Prayer” in Lutheran Service Book, p. 304. The Book of Psalms is the Bible’s hymnal/prayerbook. It behooves the Christian, therefore, to pray the Psalms daily, and the Table we will use throughout the year allows us to do so seasonally)

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
ADVENT							
<i>Morning</i>	24	122	33	50	18:1-20	102	90
<i>Evening</i>	25; 110	40; 67	85; 91	14; 16	126; 62	130; 16	80; 72

CATECHESIS FOR THE WEEK

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

Bible Story: “The Rich Man and Lazarus” (Luke 16:19-31)

Excerpts from Dr. Luther’s Large Catechism on the First Commandment

A god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. To have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe him with our whole heart. As I have often said, the trust and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If you faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you have not the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your God (365:2-3).

Behold, here you have the true honor and true worship which please God and which he commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart should know no other consolation or confidence than that in him, nor let itself be torn from him, but for him should risk and disregard everything else on earth (366:16).

Idolatry does not consist merely of erecting an image and praying to it. It is primarily in the heart, which pursues other things and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils. It neither cares for God nor expects good things from him sufficiently to trust that he wants to help, nor does it believe that whatever good it receives comes from God (367:21).

How Christians Should Be Taught to Confess from the First Commandment

My God is that which I love, trust, and fear most in my life.
I expect my comfort, good, and delight from my God.

Questions for self-examination regarding the First Commandment

*Have I loved, trusted, or feared other things or people more than I love, trust, and fear God?
Have I committed idolatry by seeking comfort, good, and delight from my own efforts rather than from God?*

Do I look to God my heavenly Father for all love, good, and joy? Is everything measured for me by what pleases me?

In all things am I self-centered and selfish?

Do I see my worry and fretting as sin against trusting God? On what things does my attention focus?

Do I complain about the troubles, people, work, and suffering God lays on me?

Do I love the things God gives more than I love Him? And do I cling to what God takes away, even though He gives me Himself?

Prayer after self-examination

Lord God, heavenly Father, I confess that I have not obeyed Your First Commandment as I ought. I have feared, loved, and trusted in other things above You. I have not put You first in my life at all times. I deserve nothing but Your temporal and eternal wrath and punishment. But, I am sorry for my sins and believe in Your Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord, who fulfilled this, and all Your commandments, perfectly. For His sake, have mercy on me and forgive me all my sins. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit, that I may do better, and look not upon my failures, but upon the perfect holiness and righteousness of Your Son, in which I am clothed by faith; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Bible Verses for Meditation on the First Commandment

Deut. 6:4-5

Psalm 118:8

Psalm 90:1-2

Proverbs 3:5-6

Psalm 73:26

John 14:6

The First Commandment in the Divine Liturgy

In the ancient Athanasian Creed we confess, “The catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in three Persons and three Persons in one God.”

Our Trinitarian faith is reflected throughout the Divine Service:

- *The Invocation and Absolution:* In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

- *The Gloria Patri in the praying of the Psalms:* Glory be to the Father and to the + Son and to the Holy Spirit . . .
- *The threefold Kyrie:* Lord, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us; Lord, have mercy upon us.
- *The Gloria in Excelsis:* Glory be to God on high . . . O Lord, God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ . . . For Thou only art holy; Thou only art the Lord. Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.
- *The termination of Collects:* . . . through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
- *The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds*
- *The threefold Sanctus:* Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
- *The Benediction:* The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

BOOK OF CONCORD ONE-YEAR READING PLAN

Mon: Three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds)
 Tues: Small Catechism—Preface
 Wed: Small Catechism—I-III
 Thurs: Small Catechism—IV-VI
 Fri: Small Catechism—Prayers-Table of Duties

LOOKING FORWARD: SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT (Populus Zion)

Malachi 4:1–6; Romans 15:4–13; Luke 21:25–36

The Lord Comes on the Last Day

The day on which our Lord returns will be a “*great and awesome day*” (Mal. 4:5). For He will come in a cloud with great power and glory. To the wicked and the proud, it will be a Day of judgment that will “*set them ablaze*” (Mal. 4:1). The signs preceding this Day will bring them fear and fainting. But to those who believe, who fear the name of the Lord, this Day is one to look forward to and rejoice in: “. . . *straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*” (Luke 21:28). Christ our Redeemer is coming; the Sun of Righteousness will bring healing in His wings. Let us, then, give attention to the words of the Lord, which do not pass away. Let us “*through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures*” (Rom. 15:4) be strengthened in our hope by the Holy Spirit and watch diligently for Jesus’ coming. Then, by God’s grace, we shall escape all these things that will come to pass and stand before the Son of Man.

Collect of the Day

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: LSB 333 “Once He Came in Blessing”