

The spirit of Advent is really a spirit of watchful hope. Every year the Church invites us not just to remember Bethlehem two thousand years ago, but to notice how the Lord is coming to us right now. Advent has this gentle way of lifting our eyes a little higher and stirring our hearts a little deeper, helping us walk more intentionally in the light of the Lord.

Our readings today give us a kind of roadmap for that:

- **Isaiah gives the destination,**
- **The psalm gives the pilgrim's joy,**
- **Jesus gives the posture: watchfulness.**

Isaiah paints a vision of peace. He imagines all these nations with different peoples, different histories, different wounds, all streaming toward the Lord's house. That's not just poetry. It's a longing we still feel in our bones. Especially here in Washington, a city full of power and policy and pressure, we hunger for something deeper, something steadier, something that truly leads to life.

The responsorial psalm takes that huge vision and pulls it right into the human heart: “I rejoiced when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’” You can almost hear someone climbing the temple steps, thinking, *“This... this is where I belong.”*

Then Jesus gives us the wake-up call. Life is easy to sleepwalk through: eating, working, scrolling, rushing. Meanwhile, God stands right in front of us trying to get our attention, trying to have a relationship with us. Jesus simply says, “Stay awake.” Be attentive. Be present. Notice him, especially in the quiet places of your day.

The Church models this spirit of watchfulness even now. This week, Pope Leo XIV travelled to Türkiye for the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

Think about that: seventeen centuries ago, at a time when the Church was wrestling with deep confusion about who Jesus truly is, bishops traveled from all over the Roman Empire to gather in one place. They prayed, they debated, they listened to the Holy Spirit, and from that came the Nicene Creed we still profess every Sunday.

**“True God from true God, begotten, not made,
consubstantial with the Father.”**

Those words didn’t just come out of a committee or fall out of the sky. They’re the fruit of the Church trying very hard to walk in the Lord’s light, just like Isaiah imagined, just like we are called to do now. Pope Leo’s visit isn’t just a historical anniversary. It’s a reminder that unity and clarity of faith are things we must keep working toward, with humility and patience and a willingness to listen.

Our world and our city could use that kind of watchfulness and peace right now. We still see the kinds of conflicts Isaiah longed to see ended. And even in our own hearts, we fight a different kind of battle: the constant noise, the stress, the screens, the rush, the expectations, the pressure to keep producing, keep striving, keep moving. It’s so easy to get pulled away from God.

Advent steps into all of that and says, very simply:

“Breathe. Slow down. God is near.”

So how do we actually do that?

Here are a few simple practices that can make a real difference:

- **Start your morning with a brief, honest prayer. Something as simple as: “Lord, help me notice you today.”**
- **End the day with a quick examen. Where did I walk in God’s light? Where did I push it away?**
- **Choose one quiet evening each week. Turn off the news alerts, light an Advent candle, read Scripture, pray.**
- **In your relationships, choose peace. The world is loud enough: be the person who listens, who apologizes first, who builds instead of tears down.**
- **And do something concrete for someone in need. Doesn’t have to be dramatic, just real.**

None of these are burdens. They’re ways of preparing room—real room—for the Lord.

Because here's the heart of Advent:

We don't know the hour, but we know the One who comes.

And the One who comes is not a stranger to us. He is the God who loved us enough to become small: small enough for a manger, small enough for your heart and mine.

Let's ask for the grace to stay awake, to walk in the light, and to welcome the Lord who is always drawing near.