

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY ADVENT SERVICE – week 2

Second week of Advent – [Readings are from Tuesday, Dec. 6](#)

Welcome

Opening song

Singer will be the only one unmuted but feel free to sing along wherever you are!

Lighting of candles on the Advent wreath

One of the participants in tonight's service will light the Advent candles on behalf of us all. We invite everyone on the call to light their own candles wherever they are.

First reading: From the prophet Isaiah...

Comfort, give comfort to my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
that her service is at an end,
her guilt is expiated;
Indeed, she has received from the hand of God
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:
In the desert prepare the way of the LORD!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!
Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill shall be made low;
The rugged land shall be made a plain,
the rough country, a broad valley.
Then the glory of God shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together;
for the mouth of God has spoken.

A voice says, "Cry out!"
I answer, "What shall I cry out?"
"All flesh is grass,
and all their glory like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower wilts,
when the breath of God blows upon it.
So then, the people are the grass.
Though the grass withers and the flower wilts,
the word of our God stands forever."

Go up onto a high mountain,
Zion, herald of glad tidings;
Cry out at the top of your voice,



Jerusalem, herald of good news!
Fear not to cry out
and say to the cities of Judah:
Here is your God!
Here comes with power
the Lord GOD,
who rules by a strong arm;
Here is reward with God,
recompense before your God.
Like a shepherd God feeds the flock;
in God's arms the lambs are gathered,
Carrying them close and leading the ewes with care.

The word of God.
THANKS BE TO GOD.

Gospel reading: From the gospel of Matthew...

Jesus said to his disciples: "What is your opinion? If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will the shepherd not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if they find it, amen, I say to you, they rejoice more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your God that one of these little ones be lost."

The gospel of our God.
PRAISE TO YOU LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A reflection from this year's Advent-Christmas reflection booklet, by Creede Caldwell.

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. (Is 40:1)

Today Isaiah shouts to us of power and glory, the very fabric of the world shredded and re-stitched into God's new design. Scream it from the mountaintop! Proclaim the Justice and Constancy of our God! These words are an invigorating rallying cry to the movement of peace, crying out on behalf of the marginalized, the poor, the refugee, the excluded, the incarcerated, the oppressed.

And yet... this boisterous announcement sits in uncomfortable tension with the placid, pastoral parable Jesus gives us in the Gospel. An even more stark contrast will dawn on us in a few weeks when the God of the Universe is found wriggling in a feed trough. The Lamb reminds us that our God likes to play with the paradoxical. Power and glory arrive in the shape of one who stinks of manure. The trees of the forest rejoice in the one who will hang helplessly on a tree.

Whom have you written off? Which little ones have you let stray when you should have reached out in peace and friendship? They might smell, or even (gasp!) vote differently than you do; but if you are open, Jesus will kindly guide your hands in gestures of love.

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's reading and the question: **Whom have you written off? Which little ones have you let stray when you should have reached out in peace and friendship?** After our prayer service is over, we encourage you—if you are with others—to share your answer to tonight's question. If you aren't with others but would like to share in a small group after tonight's

prayer, we'll send everyone who stays on the call into breakout rooms with a few other people to share for about 15 minutes immediately following the prayer service.

(In preparation for the Prayers of the Faithful, feel free to enter into the chat any prayers you have that you want those of us on this call to lift up over the coming week.)

Prayers of the faithful

Our response is: God of mercy, hear our prayer.

Closing prayer

Holy Spirit, it is time.
The children are hungry,
and the poor can no longer plant hope.
Your promise
to fill the poor with good things
and the rich sent empty away
goes unfulfilled.
It is an embarrassment,
a laughingstock,
a mockery of sacred promise.
Now overtake our hearts with your fire.
On earth let the flame of justice
leap wildly.
Release in us
a brilliant blaze of compassion.
Let the fires burn away
all pettiness, greed, selfishness,
and lust for security.
Let embers of kindness fill the land.
Whoever holds a debt, it will be forgiven.
Whoever is rich will give half away:
land returned to the peasant,
prison doors thrown open,
military budgets dissolved,
a cup of water given in Jesus' name.
Again. Again. And yet again.
Amen.

— *Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, Pax Christi Teacher of Peace*

(In 1-2 minutes everyone who wants to stay on the call will be sent to breakout rooms to discuss tonight's reading, reflection and Advent question. Breakout rooms will automatically close after 15 minutes.)