First reading Isaiah 63: 16-17, 64: 1, 3-8

'O that you would rend the heavens and come down.'

You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage.

O that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.

You came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.

You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways.

Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved?

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

We all fade like a leaf,

and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Responsorial Psalm 80(79): 2, 3, 15, 16, 18,19. R4

Bring us back, O God;
let your face shine forth, and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hear us,
enthroned on the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse up your might and come to save us.

God of hosts, turn again, we implore;
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the stock your right hand has planted,
the son you have claimed for yourself.

May your hand be on the man at your right hand,
the son of man you have confirmed as your own.
And we shall never forsake you again;
give us life that we may call upon your name.

Second reading 1 Corrinthians 1: 3-9

We are waiting for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge — even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you — so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Acclamation 85(84):8

Alleluia, alleluia.
Show us, O Lord, your mercy,
and grant us your salvation.
Alleluia.

Gospel Mark 13: 33-37

'Stay awake — for you do not know when the master of the house will come.'

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake — for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning — lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.'

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Feast days this week
Monday 30th November: St Andrew
Thursday 3rd December: St Francis Xavier
Friday 4th December: St John Damascene

The Cycle of Prayer

Migrants and Refugees

especially on 3 December.

Background

On December 3rd the Church commemorates St Francis Xavier. This is the day chosen by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People to mark World Migration Day. Each year there is a message from the Holy Father reflecting on the 'signs of the times'.

Asylum seekers and refugees — I wish to underline how the tendency is to stop at the question of their arrival while disregarding the reasons for which they left their native land. [Benedict XVI - Message for World Migration day 2005]

Prayer

Lord, no one is a stranger to you
and no one is ever
far from your loving care.
In your kindness watch over
refugees and exiles,
those separated from their loved ones,
young people who are lost,
and those who have left
or run away from home.
Bring them back safely
to the place where they long to be
and help us always
to show your kindness
to strangers and those in need.

Roman Missal: For Refugees and Exiles

Readings and Reflection **1st Sunday of Advent** **29th November**

Like people at airports

There are various themes to explore as Advent begins. Isaiah calls us to confess our sins and hope for better days. Paul's thanksgiving to God is upbeat about the future. Jesus warns us against complacency, for the end is coming sooner than we expect. We might go mainly with the first and third readings, about being prepared for the day of the Lord.

Advent invites reassessment of where our ways are leading us. This annual reminder that the world as we know it will one day end, sounds more appropriate in the northern Wintry season, when daylight is short and darkness seems to be winning over the light. But the positive side of this is that a new Spring day is dawning over the horizon, when Christ will come again into our lives with power to save us.

Do you ever watch people at airports, waiting for loved ones to arrive from a flight? They often seem excited, eager for the first appearance of the familiar face, ready with the broad smile of greeting to embrace the returning traveller. We too wait for the Lord's coming with eagerness, because we long for his presence. The waiting is important because, during our life's pilgrimage, we are incomplete. As Augustine once said, "You have made us for Yourself, o Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." At some deep level of our personhood we are in need, a need that only God can fill.

This is a time to open our hearts and invite the Lord to bring us to completion. We begin Advent, yearning for his coming. Today's first reading puts this yearning into an image, that "We have all withered like leaves... blown by the wind." The whirling, withered leaves of autumn are a familiar scene these past few weeks. Isaiah proposes the dead leaves as symbols of all that is dried up and withered in our lives. But he also calls us to look for a better day. God is still in charge of creation, and our personal lives are under his loving care. We pray this Advent, "Come, Lord Jesus," and make our own the words of the psalm, "Visit this vine and protect it, the vine your right hand has chosen." It is a central plank of our faith that the Lord never abandons His people.

Back to the people at airports waiting for loved ones to arrive. It is an alert, active waiting – keeping an eye on the time. In today's gospel Jesus says, "Be on your guard, stay awake." He wants us to focus on our task here and now. We are to grow more mature in our relationship with others and with him, paying attention to prayer, and living with his message in our hearts. That's what waiting for him should be like. And while we wait, we can enjoy his gifts, as promised, for as Paul assures us: "You will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit while you are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ." ***associationofcatholicpriests.ie***