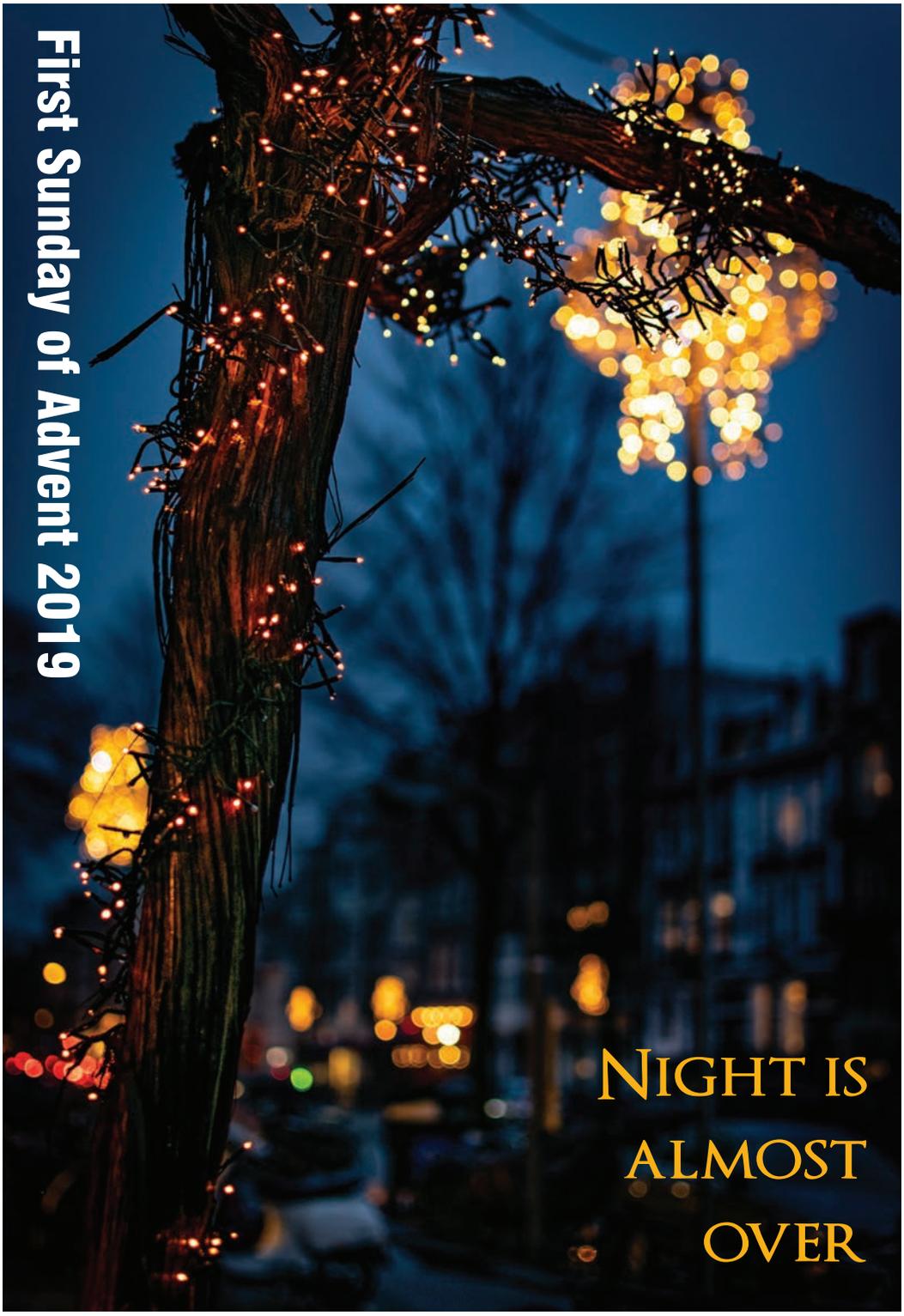


First Sunday of Advent 2019

**NIGHT IS
ALMOST
OVER**



First Sunday of Advent

FROM THE READINGS

FIRST READING: Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord ...
that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.
Isaiah 2:3

SECOND READING: You must wake up now:
our salvation is even nearer than it was ...
the night is almost over; it will be daylight soon.
Romans 13:11-12

GOSPEL: Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what
day your Lord is coming ...
be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.
Matthew 24:42-44

REFLECTIONS

It is time to look forward, with patience, confidence and hope:

The one who has hope lives differently.
Pope Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi, 2

Hope is a state of the soul rather than a response to the evidence.
It is not the expectation that things will turn out successfully but
the conviction that something is worth working for, however it
turns out.
Seamus Heaney, Seamus Heaney and the Classics

Bad times! Troublesome times!

Let our lives be good; and the times are good.
We make our times; such as we are, such are the times.
St Augustine

There is a lust for 'life to the full' in most of our bloodstreams.
This powerful push is in everything. All life is fired by longing ...
the human heart is no different. It is full of the instinct to reach
out beyond itself, to bring joy and justice everywhere. There is
a restlessness in all of us, a searching that is very hard to truly

satisfy ... all of this has to do with God. We know that all true human longing is God's longing.

Daniel O'Leary, Prism of Love

What we do with our longings, both in terms of handling the pain and the hope they bring us, that is our spirituality. Augustine says: 'You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.' Spirituality is about what we do with our unrest.

Ronald Rolheiser, The Holy Longing

TRUST IN THE SLOW WORK OF GOD

Above all, let us trust in the slow work of God.

We are, quite naturally,
impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way
to something unknown,
something new.

And yet, it is the law of all progress that it is made
by passing through some stages of instability ...
and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you.
Your ideas mature gradually.
Let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today
what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give your Lord the benefit of your believing
that His hand is leading you and of your
accepting the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

1. **From these readings and reflections**, what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
2. **Imagine** going up God's mountain, staying awake, so you may learn God's ways, walk in his paths. What do you learn?
3. **Remember** a time when you were restless and impatient for what was ahead. What happened? What did you learn about yourself and your life, about God?
4. **Express** a hope or intention for the future.

CLOSING PRAYER

An Advent Blessing

Follow, where the Spirit of Hope leads you.

Listen, as the Child of Peace cries for you.

Rejoice, as the Love of God embraces you

and go now, with Hope, Peace and Love in your hearts and the blessing of the Creator,

Child and Spirit forever with you. Amen.

Richard Becher, 600 Blessings and Prayers from around the world



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