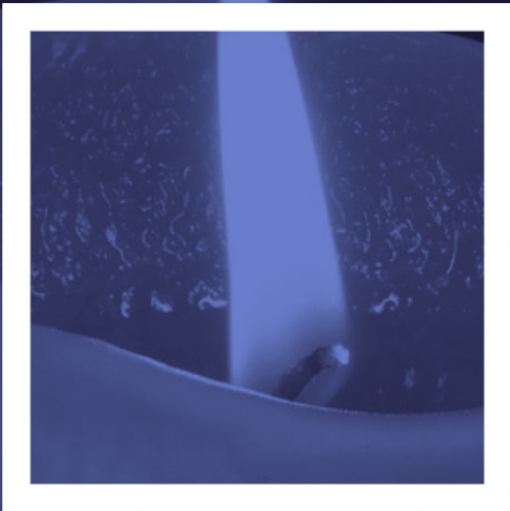


FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

This reflection comes from the first reading, Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7



ADVENT



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Yet, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands.

One of the greatest debates about faith is the problem of evil. We often ask, "why does God allow such horrible things to happen?" We ask personal questions, "why didn't God save my job?" or we ask broader questions, "why does God let war happen?"

Yet, the first reading takes this question and completely flips it on its head; instead of asking why God lets evil happen, this question posits another thought: why does God let us fall astray from him, and let us commit evil? It is far more comfortable to ask the question of why the world is filled with evil rather than why we do evil. Very few of us commit truly criminal actions, but none of us are without sin; we lie to get out of trouble, we cheat to get ahead, and steal to get what we want. The first reading forces us to reflect on our position; we are only human, and as such we falter from God's path. It is easy for us to blame God for all the evils in the world, but the truth is we are all sinners, with failings and sins of our own fault.

With all this in consideration, the final verses puts forward the final and arguably most important truth of the reading; despite all our failings, our sins, and our broken commitments, God still not only loves us, but despite our state of sin still uses us as an instrument for His will. It is crucial that we remember this, because it is very easy for us to realize our sin and decide it is impossible for us to be saved. We must not fall into this state of complacency and cynicism with our sin; instead, we should remember the lesson from this reading, and work to serve God's will rather than our own. Like the reading says, we must learn to be like clay, so God can mold us. Once we accept this, there is little that we cannot do; through God's love we can do all things, and work to build a world that benefits all of humankind.

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