

Read

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5,
6-7, 8-9

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:37-44

LIVING THE WORD

First Sunday of Advent

November 27, 2022



REFLECTION

The Gospel for the first Sunday of Advent instructs us to “stay awake” so that we aren’t caught unprepared for Christ’s return, but it isn’t always clear to us what that looks like in our lives. The Church has some guidance, of course: we should avoid sin and receive the sacraments so our souls are ready for an eternity with God, who is perfect love and goodness. How else can we be ready?

The examples Jesus gives in the Gospel reading provide a few hints. Christ’s return will come as a surprise, like the flood in the story of Noah. Like the people in Noah’s time, we will be caught unprepared if we let ourselves be consumed by shallow pleasures and distractions. It is so easy to forget that we have a greater purpose in our lives than making ourselves feel good! We are to stay awake like the homeowner on watch against a thief in the night. The thief that breaks into our homes is only interested in our possessions, but if we go through life distracted or dull our consciences to sleep, we risk losing something more precious and difficult to replace than any material thing: our integrity.



ACTION

Advent begins with a reminder that we need to prepare for Christ’s second coming in much the same way we now await the celebration of Christ’s birth. In the midst of the decorations, parties, and gift buying of secular Christmas preparations, traditions like the Advent wreath or Jesse tree remind us to pause and prepare our hearts to welcome Christ. Both of these practices usually include daily Scripture readings to help keep our hearts and minds focused on Christ and not get distracted by commercial Christmas.



Search online for directions on how to create a Jesse tree or Advent wreath and then make one and put it into practice this Advent!

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How does your family prepare for Christmas? Your parish? Your school?
- ❖ What are the similarities between preparing to welcome Christ and preparing for a disaster like theft or a flood? What are the differences?

Introduction to ADVENT



The Season

Of all of the seasons of the liturgical year, Advent is the one many Catholics misunderstand. Not only that, but the spirit of Advent is difficult to maintain with all of the references to “the Christmas season” in advertisements, television and radio programming, social gatherings, school assemblies, and family preparations. Yet the season of Advent is necessary if we are to celebrate Christmas well and if we are to live our lives well. Advent’s dual focus is likely the cause of some of the misperception about the season among many in our pews. At the beginning of the season, we focus on the end of all time, and the eventuality of our death and judgment. This is important. It is an annual checkup on our recognition that our actions have bearing on the way we will be judged by Christ, upon our death, and the way humanity will be judged at the end of time. Alongside this focus of repentance, Advent also is a time of joyful expectation. We await the end of time with joyful hope because we trust in God’s promise of eternal life and look forward to the second coming of Christ. We also prepare our hearts to joyfully receive Christ in the mystery of the incarnation, through which God showed the world his immeasurable love and mercy by sending his only Son to us for our salvation.

We, then, must be unapologetic in our insistence on observing the season when we are in our parish settings, and provide as much catechesis as possible through word and witness, color, ritual, and prayer. Send the young people home with the sounds and

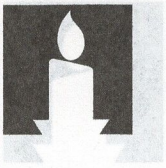
sights of Advent in their minds and hearts, so that the season may lead all of us to wait, prepare, and hope in the saving love of Jesus Christ.

Celebrating Advent with Teens

Many teens appreciate the rhythm of the transitions to Advent and then to Christmas, particularly if they mark these seasons at home through special prayer and traditions. Teens may be uncomfortable with the early Advent focus on the end of time, especially if they have recently experienced the death of a loved one. They likely already know that Advent is about waiting, anticipation, and preparation. Invite your teens to keep this brief yet spiritually rich season well, and ask them to share their progress as Advent unfolds. Focusing on Advent during Advent allows for a richer appreciation of the mystery of the incarnation that we will celebrate during Christmas Time.

Preparing the Liturgical Environment

Use Advent violet to help set the tone for your gatherings with the teens during this season. The liturgical environment for Advent will be in stark contrast to the Christmas decorations that can overwhelm us in the weeks leading up to Christmas. A few bare branches or images of Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Mary might be included in your Advent environment, along with an Advent wreath. Leave a Bible open to the Gospel for the current Sunday.



November 27, 2022

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LECTIONARY #1A

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalms 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:37-44

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

As we begin this season of preparation with the First Sunday of Advent, Jesus warns us to "stay awake" and "be prepared" for the coming of the Son of Man (or the second coming). Our human instinct is to want to know when this will happen, as if we are asking how much time do we have before we have to get it together and face God's final judgment. Jesus speaks directly to that kind of attitude, explaining that we don't and we won't know when. Instead, we need to wake up and pay attention to our moral and spiritual lives; to how we live and what we value on a day-to-day basis. While our culture emphasizes Christmas to-do lists filled with shopping and decorations, today's Gospel challenges us to go deeper by preparing our lives for the coming of Christ.

Q FOCUS: Enter the season of Advent by preparing your life to welcome Christ.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

A new liturgical year for the Church begins today, on the First Sunday of Advent, with a new cycle of readings focusing on the Gospel of Matthew. Advent, from the Latin "come to," is a season of preparation. We prepare for Christ to "come to" the world in three ways: by celebrating the incarnation at Christmas, by welcoming Christ into our daily lives, and by preparing our souls for his second coming at the end of time. That's a lot to get ready for in such a short time, but it is, in a sense, the task of our entire Christian

life. The saints give witness to this and provide us with examples of ordinary people living extraordinary lives of faith.

Church Teaching Connection

"The path of holiness is a source of peace and joy, given to us by the Spirit. At the same time, it demands that we keep 'our lamps lit' (Lk 12:35) and be attentive. . . . Those who think they commit no grievous sins against God's law can fall into a state of dull lethargy. Since they see nothing serious to reproach themselves with, they fail to realize that their spiritual life has gradually turned lukewarm. They end up weakened and corrupted" (*Gaudete et exsultate*, 164).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 24:37-44

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at



the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

Be prepared! But what are we preparing for? Our Church and secular culture have different ideas. It's the season to prepare for the coming of Christ into the world! Between the Black Friday sales and Cyber Monday deals, retailers would have us believe that preparing for Christmas happens by shopping, decorating, and obsessing about the superficial stuff.

The intense tone of today's Gospel reading calls us to wake up and go deeper. If you've ever studied the wrong material for a test or done the wrong assignment, you know how important it is to be clear on what to prepare and why.

► **What do you think Jesus is telling us to prepare for? Why would we need to prepare?**

► **What superficial stuff do you see people wasting time obsessing about? Have you ever found yourself getting sucked into the superficial Christmas things as well?**

The phrase "the coming of the Son of Man," references a passage in the book of the prophet Daniel describing a vision of the heavenly throne of God who sits in judgment over the nations (see Daniel 7:13). What we hear Jesus speaking about is a preview into what the end of time, the second coming, will look like—one will be taken and one will be left. Today's Gospel is a call to prepare for the second coming by digging deep, being real, and examining your soul.

► **Who or what helps you dig deep, and be real? Who or what makes it difficult to do so?**

Superhero and science fiction movies often show the audience a snippet of ordinary people living their life and then—BAM!—some major catastrophic event occurs. Jesus uses a similar technique when he paints the picture of what it will be like for us at the end of time; we will not know the day or the hour until it's already happening.

► **Why do you think Jesus makes it abundantly clear that we will not know when the world is going to end?**

► **How could a teacher's warning to be prepared for a pop quiz at any time be similar to or different from the analogy Jesus offers with the thief in the night?**

Staying awake in our lives of faith means paying attention to the moral and spiritual choices you make. Reject the apathy of "whatever" attitudes and lukewarm spirituality. Prepare by being intentional on the path of discipleship in your day-to-day lives. Work on being a good person now. Improve your relationship with God now. Put your faith into action now. Reach out to those who are lonely now. Love and serve God by caring for others now. Jesus wants us to always be prepared because he wants us to enter the kingdom of heaven.

► **What are some specific things you can do now to prepare your heart for the coming of Christ?**

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 72.

During Advent, we prepare our hearts and souls for the coming of Christ.

Jesus reminds us to be prepared for the second coming at the end of time.

We prepare by paying attention to our moral and spiritual lives.

Act on the Word

Preparing Hearts

For this activity, you will need to make copies of a blank calendar with a one-month layout for the four weeks of Advent, from November 27 to December 24, one for each teen, as well as pens or pencils.

One way to intentionally prepare our moral and spiritual lives for the coming of Christ is to identify small daily actions which we can put into practice. Distribute copies of the calendar and pencils to each teen. Explain that together, they will be creating their own Advent calendars to prepare their hearts for Christ, with twenty-eight small, doable moral or spiritual actions.

First, ask the large group for three examples of doable daily actions, such as an act of loving kindness, an act of service, or an act of prayer. This helps everyone have an idea of what they will be doing in small groups. Then divide the teens into small groups. Challenge each group to come up with ten different, specific acts, noting each action on a day's square during the four weeks of Advent. Encourage them to come up with a mix of different acts (kindness, service, and prayer). For instance, an act of

loving kindness might be inviting someone to join your group for lunch. An act of service might be working in a food pantry. An act of prayer might be saying the Rosary.

If any group needs help brainstorming, prompt them to think about opportunities to do something good during their day at school, as well as for their family at home. The actions may be private or public and can be as simple as expressing gratitude to a teacher as you leave their classroom or as involved as helping with a toy drive.

Once each group has ten actions, have each group take a turn reading their actions. Encourage the teens to fill in their own calendars with different ideas from their peers. Of course, it's okay to repeat any acts! The idea is to have small daily reminders that allow us to put our faith into action and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ now.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God,

*you provide the signs of the times
for us to read.*

Help us in our efforts

to bring peace

to fearful neighbors and friends,

assuring them of your faithfulness.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.