

Read

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9,
10, 14

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

LIVING THE WORD

First Sunday of Advent

November 28, 2021



REFLECTION

Plenty of cutesy Christmas imagery fills television screens and shopping malls in December: sweet baby Jesus laying calmly in a manger, surrounded by adoring parents and gentle farm animals. Peace on earth! Glad tidings for all!

Jesus doesn't paint such a calm scene in today's Gospel. The Son of God and Son of Man came to redeem the world—and redemption is no easy feat. The same sweet baby wrapped in swaddling clothes will destroy evil and eradicate injustice in the end times. "People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world," Jesus warns (Luke 21:26). We may not know exactly how or when our final redemption will come, but Jesus' advice is very clear: be ready.

Advent is a season of preparation for Christ and his arrival at the end of time. While the warm and fuzzy has a place in our seasonal celebrations, Jesus wants to ensure that we understand the seriousness of his mission to save humankind, and our call to help along the way. We can better the world one small action at a time: help an elderly neighbor, feed a hungry child, smile at the stranger passing by. We are called to wake up to the needs of those around us and attend to them to be ready for Christ



ACTION

This week's Gospel is filled with mighty images. Sketch out the scene Jesus describes: the sun, moon, stars, and earth in dismay; the roaring of the sea and the waves; the Son of Man coming in a cloud. Or maybe create an original song or poem about the images we read about in today's Gospel. Putting down on paper some idea of what the end times could look like is one way of preparing your heart and imagination.



How is the end of time depicted in popular songs or movies? Watch or listen to some of them this week and compare them to today's Gospel reading.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you imagine yourself experiencing the coming of the kingdom?
- ❖ What is one way you can prepare your community for Christ's coming?

Introduction to **ADVENT**



The Season

Of all 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 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.



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FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LECTIONARY #3C

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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

Advent is a time of waiting and of preparation. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus invites us to consider the preparation we take on a daily basis as we wait for his second coming at the end of time. Jesus doesn't want for us to only halfheartedly anticipate him—he wants for us to always be ready to greet him at any time. Being ready for Jesus isn't an accident or a coincidence, it is a purposeful set of actions and way of living on our part. Today we reflect on how we can cultivate a life that centers on preparing all things for Jesus and how our actions will affect the world around us.

Q FOCUS: *Always be prepared for Jesus.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Advent is the liturgical season designed to prepare the faithful for Christmas. During this season we always have four Sundays, though the number of the days in the season varies based on the day of the week on which Christmas falls. Advent can be longer if Christmas falls on a Friday, and shorter if it falls on a Monday. During Advent our liturgical colors match the candles being lit—in order the weeks are as follows: violet, violet, rose, violet. There are two important Marian feasts that occur later during Advent, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We celebrate many other saints who joyfully waited for the Lord and expressed that hope in their actions.

Church Teaching Connection

When we think about the end of time and standing before Christ at the final judgment, we come to realize how our actions toward one another matter in an absolute sense. We are called to holiness, and holiness can be identified by its fruits. We must imitate Christ and place ourselves firmly in a place of loving God and loving our neighbors. The word *judgment* is an intimidating one, but it is one that is clearly intended to help us understand the importance of our lives here on earth as we prepare for eternity in heaven. What we do for one another matters (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 678-679).

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

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

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

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.

“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man.”

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:

Many families in the United States recently celebrated the Thanksgiving holiday. In the households that hosted holiday dinners, people spent a great deal of time making lists, collecting ingredients, brining turkeys, baking pies, and even prearranging the oven racks in preparation of dishes. Children may have been set to work polishing the silverware only used for holidays, and older teens may have followed instructions for setting the table for the guests expected to arrive at the home. High chairs are set up for babies, and we make space for the walkers or canes of the elderly guests.

When something wonderful and exciting is going to occur, we prepare for it, and we make sure that we take care of each person in attendance. Before Thanksgiving people made themselves ready to cook and to host a meal; they do not stop by the grocery store on the afternoon of Thanksgiving day hoping a turkey might be available. Nobody purchases flour and hopes that the rolls will make themselves.

► How did you and your family prepare for Thanksgiving?

► How do you prepare for important events in general?

During Advent, we prepare ourselves for Jesus. Every week we prepare ourselves to meet Jesus in the Eucharist, but always, and especially during Advent, we remember that we are preparing ourselves to meet Jesus in person someday. At every Mass we hear that we Christians wait in “joyful hope” for the coming of Christ our savior. We believe that Jesus came to earth and died, that he was resurrected and then returned to his Father, and that he will someday come again. It is truly wonderful that Jesus has promised to return for his people. As the ancient Jews waited for the savior to come, we wait for the savior to return to us again.

► When you think about Jesus' second coming at the end of time, is it something you are anticipating with hope or is it something that is unknown and somewhat intimidating?

While we are encouraged to wait for that day in hope, we don't waste time while we wait! Through today's Gospel reading, Jesus calls us to have awareness of our time of waiting, and calls us to be deliberate in our preparations. Just like a Thanksgiving dinner doesn't appear fully prepared onto a table, nor can we just hope that when we meet Jesus at his second coming everything will work out okay. We are called to model our life on Jesus' life, which was an example of the love and joy of the kingdom of God. Preparation is purposeful and requires time and energy. This is true in our daily tasks as well as in our spiritual life.

► How do our prayers help in our preparation? How do our actions demonstrate our preparedness?

► How can we spend time this Advent preparing for Jesus' return?

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.

Advent is a time of great anticipation—we recall the Jewish people's wait for a messiah as we prepare for Christmas and await Jesus' return.

Preparation is purposeful, not accidental.

Spend this season preparing yourself for the coming of the Lord.

Act on the Word

Preparing for the Lord

We prepare for the coming of Jesus in many ways. This discussion will help the young people focus on three ways to prepare for Jesus' coming; sacrament, prayer, and ministry. Introduce the topic to the teens and remind them that each of these three things are actions. This means that they aren't events that happen despite of us, they happen because of our choosing to participate or initiate action. Remind the group that sacraments give grace, prayer is our communication with God, and ministry is the way we use our talents in our faith community. Then, in small groups, have the teens discuss how they will approach each of these three things as they prepare for our remembrance of Jesus' first coming at Christmas and our daily waiting for Jesus' second coming. The following prompts may help the guide the small group discussions.

- ✧ What sacraments will you receive during Advent? How can you better appreciate the grace that flows from the sacraments?
- ✧ How will you speak to God in prayer this Advent and how will listen to him? Discuss the different forms of prayer you might utilize during the

Advent season. Lectio divina is prayer practice that helps a person grow in understanding of Scripture. The rosary is a meditative prayer that helps a person more deeply understand the life of Christ through the Virgin Mary. Spontaneous prayer helps a person express their needs and their thanks to God.

- ✧ What are some ministerial actions you might begin or continue during Advent? Have you considered becoming a reader, singing in the choir, or helping with hospitality as people enter the church? What other organizations in your parish can you become involved in that make the best use of your talents and interests?

After the groups have finished their discussions, invite volunteers to share some of their reflections. Encourage them to think more deeply about how all of these actions prepare us for Christ's coming.

Closing Prayer

*Lord God,
you never cease to watch over your people,
and you are always alert and ready
to answer us in our need.
Help us to practice in our lives the art of
patient waiting,
so that this Advent may strengthen our hope
in the Lord's promised return.
Bless this waiting world with the gift of
your peace.
We ask this 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.