

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

December 1, 2019



REFLECTION

In Disney's classic film *The Lion King*, the evil Uncle Scar sings "Be Prepared" to convey the importance of what is to come. Perhaps not surprisingly, fear is the underlying emotion throughout the song. Scar assures certain starvation, death, and destruction to all who hear his words but choose not to act accordingly. Preparation in this sense is nothing more than a way to avoid misery.

Not unlike *The Lion King*, Jesus tells his disciples of the importance of preparing for the coming of God. Quite differently, however, Jesus does not capitalize on fear to promote his message, for the coming of God is not based on terror. Rather, as Christians, we wait in joyful hope for the coming of Christ. We do not prepare for the coming of God because we are afraid. Instead, we look forward to God's presence in our lives with eager anticipation for what is to come.

Christian waiting is rooted in hope, and hope is the opposite of fear. Hope gives life; fear causes desolation. We do not wait for the coming of Christ in a spirit of emptiness or loneliness. As Christians, we wait for the coming of Christ with eager anticipation and deep peace, knowing the immense happiness that comes from relationship with God.

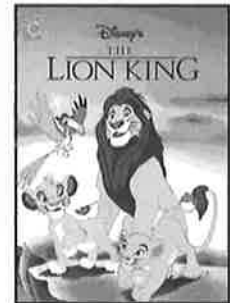


ACTION

As you begin this season of Advent, create an Advent calendar to count down the days until Christmas. At the end of each day, write down one way that you experienced hope. Thank God for each of these experiences of hope that bring peace and joy to your Advent season.



Watch *The Lion King* and reflect on preparing for God's Kingdom.



? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What brings you hope at the beginning of this season of Advent?
- ❖ Why is it sometimes difficult to live in hope?

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. Not only this, the focus on the end of time at the beginning of Advent sets the stage for our preparation for the season of Christmas, when we immerse ourselves in the mystery of the Incarnation, and in God’s great love and mercy for all.

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 youth 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.

Preparing the Liturgical Environment

Use Advent violet to help set the tone for your gatherings with the youth in these seasons. 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.



December 1, 2019

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LECTIONARY #1A

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 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

Nobody knows the day or the hour that our Lord will return to earth. We must keep ourselves ready to meet Jesus at all times, because we do not know the day or hour that he will arrive. Our wait for the Lord is one that is full of joy and hope. Advent is a time of waiting and preparation both for Christ's return and for his Nativity.

Q FOCUS: *We wait for our Lord and Savior's return.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Advent has a twofold meaning: (1) preparation for the Lord's coming at the end of time, and (2) preparation for the birth of Christ at Christmas. As Advent begins we see a shift to violet shades in the church. This time of waiting until December 24. This week we celebrate the optional Memorial of St. Nicholas (December 6), the saint after whom the mythical Santa Claus is based.

Church Teaching Connection

"Until the arrival of the new heavens and the new earth in which justice dwells (see 2 Peter 3:13) the pilgrim church, in its sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and it takes its place among the creatures which groan and until now suffer the pains of childbirth and await the revelation of the children of God (see Romans 8:19-22)" (*Lumen gentium*, 48).

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:

Advent is the time we spend preparing ourselves for Christ's coming at the end of time and his birth at Christmas. It is the time we make ourselves ready, for we know not the time he will come, and a time in which we ponder the great mystery of the Incarnation. We recall the generations of faithful people who waited for the Messiah, and we recall their faith that God would keep his word. We consider the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in this time too—we are grateful for the young teenage girl who so selflessly gave her assent to help God in his great plan, and we are grateful that she mothered Jesus from before his birth, all the way to the Cross and beyond.

- ▶ What do think it means that Christ will return at the end of time?
- ▶ Knowing that you should ready yourselves for Christ's return, how might this change the way in which you live in the world?
- ▶ How do you prepare for Christ to be born within you? What does this mean for your life?

In this first week of Advent we begin our holy preparation with a reading about Jesus' return at the end of days. At first glance, it may seem to be a curious reading as we are preparing to celebrate

Christ's first coming. Consider that the theme of Advent is “waiting.” From the earliest books of the Bible, faithful people have longed for a savior. They longed for the promised one to finally arrive. Jesus' life, suffering, death, and Resurrection brought us back to God. Our generation and indeed the generations of the past two thousand years have lived with the knowledge that the promised Savior has already come to earth.

Our waiting, however, has not ended. The wait continues for our generation too, as we wait for the return of our Lord. When Jesus told his disciples that he would return after his Ascension, they waited, expecting that moment to arrive any day. When he did not return in that generation, the next generation thought that surely Jesus would come to them in their lifetime. Every generation, even those currently living, have members who insist that Jesus must be coming back in the next few years. Scripture, however, tells us that we do not know the day or the hour that our Lord will return. Nobody knows this information, except God himself. However, this waiting is joyful—we do not wait in fear.

▶ Why should we expect Christ's return with joy? Why is his return something that we should not fear?

One of the major themes in this readings that we should always be ready for Christ's return. Just as we don't need to wait cowering in fear, hiding in basements, we also shouldn't forget that our Lord is coming again, and while we are happy and excited for his return, we shouldn't neglect being ready for it. It is our job to be ready to meet our Lord at any time. Scripture uses the analogy of a thief coming in the night; thieves are successful because they prey on those who do not expect them. If we do not expect Jesus, then we have not prepared ourselves for him. We have not used our wait wisely if we do not ready our souls. We should remain in a ready state, as we joyfully anticipate the coming of our Lord! During this Advent, concentrate on readying your soul to meet the long-awaited Jesus.

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 80.

What questions do you have about Catholic beliefs about the Second Coming of Christ? Do you have any worries or confusion about the topic?

What actions should you take to make yourself ready for the coming of the Lord at Christmas? What plans are you making to ensure you can meet these goals?

Does your family have any traditions for getting ready for Christmas? What are things your family does during Advent?

Act on the Word

Pro-Gospel, Pro-Life

During Advent, the lives of young parents, especially mothers facing unanticipated pregnancies come to mind. Think about the story of angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she was pregnant. What did the Virgin Mary endure when she had to explain her pregnancy to her wondering family and friends? What struggles did she face when she was so young and poor when having her first child? What challenges did she face living in an occupied land in a violent time? What kind of ministries does your community offer for young parents? Is there a place young women or couples can go if experiencing an unexpected pregnancy? Are there charities who help young parents provide clothing and diapers for their babies? Find out what resources your area has for struggling families, and learn what their needs are. See if you, and possibly your youth ministry group, can work to help one of the resource centers in your community. You can earn money to purchase diapers, or perhaps spend a weekend afternoon helping the center organize baby clothes. Your service can make a difference for families!

Closing Prayer

*Emmanuel,
you offer your presence to us.
Open our eyes that we may see you in our
brothers and sisters
and be attentive to their needs.
You live and reign for ever and ever.
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.