

First Sunday of Advent

Jesus will return

INTRODUCTION

Today we begin our preparation to celebrate the birthday of our saviour, Jesus Christ. During Advent we think about the past, our lives today and what will be in the future.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the altar candles and the first candle on the Advent wreath. Each Sunday the light will grow brighter as we draw closer to Christmas day when Jesus 'the light of the world' was born.

SORRY

During Advent we prepare to celebrate Jesus Christ's birthday, and we spend time thinking about how to welcome Jesus in our lives every day.

(Ask the children to close their eyes and listen carefully.)

Do we always remember to make a space for Jesus in our day? Do we remember to thank him for his goodness? Do we sometimes forget to share the love and happiness he gave to us with other people? Do we treat each person we meet as though they were Jesus himself?

Advent is a good time for us all to make a fresh start; to think of ways to welcome Jesus and to show how much we really love him. Spend a few moments talking to Jesus in silence, before singing Sorry Song 1 together.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing the Advent Song.

GOSPEL (cf Luke 21:25-28, 34-36)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When you see the signs in the sun and moon and stars, you will know that the time has come for the Son of God to return. Do not be afraid when all these things happen, but be filled with joy to see the power and glory of God. Stay awake and be ready, because only my heavenly Father knows when this day will come.'

DISCUSSION

Begin by asking the children to describe what the sky looks like on a clear night, and what they can see. Do they know any names of the stars? What signs will show us that the time has come for Jesus to return?

'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars.' No one knows what this means or what exactly will happen, but just as everyone on earth

can see the sky, so everyone will know that the end of time has come.

Do we know *when* this will happen? – Only God the Father knows, so Jesus tells us that we must 'be ready' to welcome him at any time!

Everyone is very busy getting ready to celebrate the birthday of Jesus. What else must we be ready for? – Jesus is living in our world *today* and we know that he will return in glory at the end of time. We must be ready to welcome him into our hearts and lives today and every day.

How should we do this? – Jesus came to share his love, forgiveness, peace and happiness with the world. If we share these gifts of his love with the people we meet everyday, by small acts of kindness or goodness, then we will be ready to fully enjoy the celebrations which take place at Christmas and at the end of time.

ACTIVITY

Over the four Sundays of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, two different activity schemes are suggested *to be continued each week*. Choose whichever is more appropriate for your particular group or the facilities you have available.

1. The Jesse Tree.

A Jesse tree traditionally represents the family tree of Jesus, but here we have adapted it to show most of the important characters involved in the Christmas celebration. Construct a free standing tree from coloured card as shown in the diagram. Each week add more characters and discuss their importance with the children. Use the drawings as a guide or ask the children to do their own. The pictures can be stuck directly onto the tree, or drawn onto 'bauble' shapes and hung as decorations. Be imaginative!

On Christmas morning place a silver star on top of the completed Jesse tree.

2. An Advent Frieze.

The frieze should illustrate the characters and events leading up to Christmas day, beginning with the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary and ending with the joyful scene at Bethlehem on Christmas day when the Holy Family is added to the frieze.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
help us to get ready
to greet you at Christmas
and at the end of time.