

First Sunday of Advent

Be ready to welcome Jesus

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Advent' means 'coming'; and it is a time of waiting and expectation. Only God knows when the second coming will be, but in today's Gospel we are reminded that we must stay awake and be ready for Jesus when he returns at the end of time.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

As we light our candles today we begin our preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus who is the 'light' of the world. Sing the Candle Song together.

SORRY

Close your eyes and speak quietly to God in your heart.

Jesus taught us to pray: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

We must be ready to forgive anyone who has hurt us by what they have said or done, if we too want to be forgiven. We ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with the strength to do this, as we pray together: 'Our Father . . .'

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Sing the Advent Song.

GOSPEL (cf Mark 13:32-37)

Jesus told his disciples: 'Only my Heavenly Father knows when the Son of Man will return, so stay awake and be ready so that you will not be taken by surprise. Like a man who goes on a journey and tells his servants to take care of his home, they must be prepared for his return at any time so that he will always find them ready to greet him.'

DISCUSSION

If someone important is coming to visit you and your family, how do you prepare for their coming?

- tidy your room and the rest of the house.
- dust and clean.
- prepare a meal.
- make up a bed in the guest room.

It is easy to be ready for a visitor when you know the time to expect them, but sometimes they arrive unexpectedly and surprise you! Would you find it more difficult to keep everything just as it should be if you did not know when your visitor was coming?

Does anyone know exactly when Jesus will return to us? - We know that Jesus will return at the end of time, but only God knows exactly when that will be.

What did Jesus tell us to do? - To keep ourselves ready for the time when he will come again.

How can we do this? - Just as we prepare our homes and put them in order for a visitor, so we can prepare our hearts and put our lives in order for Jesus.

Advent is a good time to 'spring clean' our lives! To polish up the good things and make them shine, and to clear out the bad habits so that we can make a fresh start. By living each day as Jesus taught us, filled with goodness and love, we *will* be ready to welcome him when he comes again.

ACTIVITY

Advent is a time when we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Christ and his second coming at the end of time. The activities for this season are intended to help the children to prepare for this in their own way. The events leading up to Christ's birth are the subject of each activity week by week, therefore the theme of the activity may reflect the events leading up to Christmas rather than the theme of the Gospel for the day. When each activity is completed, some time should be spent discussing and explaining the event it illustrates. According to your own particular circumstances the assembled illustrations can be displayed on posters, pinned on a board or attached to stiff card to make a free-standing display.

Cut out the figure of Mary, the window frame, and the individual rays of light. After colouring, arrange them in the scene of the Annunciation, with light from the angel Gabriel appearing to stream through the window. Add the caption: 'Hail Mary, full of grace.'

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
help us to live as you taught us,
with our lives filled with love and goodness
so that we will be ready to greet you
when you come again in glory.