

First Sunday of Advent

Be ready

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Advent' means coming. During Advent the readings tell us how God's people longed for the arrival of the Saviour promised by God. During this season we think about when Jesus will return and remember the first coming of Christ as a baby.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and then read:

Jesus said, 'Let your goodness shine out like a light in the darkness, so that through you, the love of our heavenly Father will touch the lives of others.' (cf *Matthew 5:16-17*)

SORRY

Encourage the children to close their eyes and to listen carefully to the words of this prayer:

Dear God,
help us to forgive anyone who has hurt us.
We must be ready to forgive others,
just as you forgive us.
If we have done wrong,
by our words or actions,
we want to say we are sorry
and we will try to be good.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing the Advent Song.

GOSPEL (cf *Matthew 24:37-40, 44-45*)

One day Jesus said: 'Long ago, there was a great flood, and it swept all the people away, except for Noah. No-one had prepared for the flood, for they had not listened to Noah's warnings. In the same way, you will not know when the Son of God will return, for only my heavenly Father knows this. Lead good lives so that when the time comes you are ready!'

DISCUSSION

We all know that the first coming of Jesus was as a tiny baby at Christmas. We also know that one day Jesus will return, although we have no idea when. During Advent we spend some time thinking about this second 'coming', and whether we will be ready when it happens.

Who knows when the world will end? – Only God knows the day and time, so we must always be prepared. Today's Gospel reminds us that we

should always be ready for the second coming of Jesus, at the end of time.

What sort of lives did Jesus tell us to lead? – Jesus told us that we should all lead good lives so that when God calls us to be with him in heaven we shall really be ready for the happiness which he has promised us.

The Advent wreath is a German custom, which celebrates the coming of Christ, the 'Light of the World'. The circle represents God's unending love, just as a circle has no end and no beginning. Evergreen leaves represent God's everlasting love, which never dies. The candles represent Jesus, the 'light' of the world. There is one for each Sunday of Advent and one for Christmas day itself. We light them in the following order:

1. Purple – This is the traditional colour of Advent and Lent, a symbol of our longing for forgiveness.
2. Purple
3. Pink – The traditional colour of the third Sunday of Advent (originally called Gaudete), a symbol of rejoicing as we await the Saviour's coming.
4. Purple
5. White – This candle is lit on Christmas Day itself to signify the Birth of Jesus.

ACTIVITY

It may not be practical to prepare a real Advent Wreath for the childrens' liturgy, especially in view of the fire hazard. Your parish may have one in the main Church anyway. A good suggestion is to make an Advent wreath decoration as shown here. The children can cut out the leaves, candles and the flames and fill in the appropriate colours. These are glued into place on a circle cut out from card. The first candle is 'lit' today by gluing the first flame in place and then one for each Sunday as Christmas draws closer.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Our friend Jesus,
we ask you to send your Spirit to guide us,
so that we will lead good lives,
and be ready to greet you when you return.