

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR A

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God, you love us so much
you want to be among us
and share your life with us.
Make us ready to welcome you
by following your ways
and living at peace
with one another.
We ask you to do this
through Christ, our Lord.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Culturally, we are accustomed to thinking of all Advent as a preparation for the birth of Jesus. But liturgically, we find quite a different emphasis. Only on the fourth Sunday do we focus on the birth of Jesus, the Messiah. The first Sunday reminds us of the coming of Christ at the end of time. The second and third Sundays focus on the acceptance of Christ in our lives today, through baptism. It is this tension between the present and future that gives meaning to the fourth Sunday and indeed to our celebration of the historical birth at Christmas.

Our first reading speaks of a time when all will live in peace. This will come because one day everyone will know the house of God and everyone will follow God's ways. Given the human condition, we cannot expect this prophecy to be fulfilled in this world. The church wisely combines this hope-filled reading from *Isaiah* with today's Gospel which directs our attention to the last days.

The Gospel exhorts us to "stay awake" and be ready for the return of the Lord. We do not know the time, but we do know it will be a time of

FIRST READING: *Isaiah 2:1-5*

This is a reading from the prophet Isaiah.

After the prophet Isaiah had a vision,
this is what he said to the people of Jerusalem,

"The time is coming
when everyone will know the house of God.
People of all nations will say,

'Come, let us go to the house of God
so that we may learn to follow God's ways.'


"God will decide what is right for the people.
When that day comes,
countries will not fight
against each other anymore.
Instead, people will take their swords
and make them into tools for farming the land.
They will take their spears
and make them into tools for pruning trees.
And there will never be war again.

"O people of God, come!
Let us walk in the light of God."

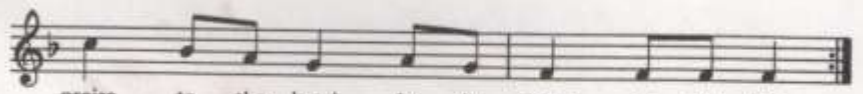
The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 122*

RESPONSE:




In the House of our God, in the House of our God, we give

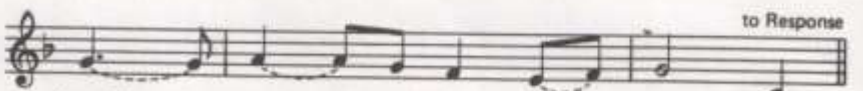


praise to the Lord in the House of our God.

VERSES:



1. I was glad when they said: "Let us go to God's
2. It is here that we find peace for our families and



to Response

1. house!" And now with joy we are standing.
2. friends, here that we find justice.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Stay a - wake, be read-y. You do not know the
hour when the Lord is com-ing. Stay a - wake, be
read - y. The Lord is com-ing soon!
Al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! "The Lord is com-ing soon."

*After Gospel, repeat Acclamation from here.

GOSPEL: *Matthew 24:42-44*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples,

"Stay awake! Always be ready!
You do not know when your Lord is coming.

"You know that if the owners of a house
knew at what time of night a thief was coming,
they would stay awake
and would not allow the thief
to break into their house.

"Well, in the same way,
you must always be ready
because you do not know the time
when the Lord is coming."

The Gospel of the Lord.

justice and peace, as the first reading tells us. Like the early Christians, we are called by these readings to strive to learn the ways of the Lord and to bring about the peace and justice that will accompany the return of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

NOTE: As a basic principle, it is important to have the children express what they heard in the readings. One need not do this by asking "What did you hear?" each time you gather. But once you set up that style of reflection, the children will naturally learn to participate by sharing what they have heard.

Give the children time to share what they have heard. Then help them see that we usually prepare for events because we know when they are expected. For example, we prepare for Christmas now because we know that it is celebrated on December 25th. We prepare for a birthday party because we know the date of the birthday. But Jesus tells us today that we do not know the date when he will return, and so we must always be prepared for that great event. We must be ready to meet him when he comes.

How do you think we can be ready? What does Jesus mean, "be ready"? What would you want to be doing when Jesus comes? Would you want to be at war or fighting someone?

Ask the children what the prophet Isaiah told us about this special time.

Help the children see that we can always be ready by trying to make peace instead of war. Be sure the children understand this in terms of their own lives rather than focusing on world peace. Children are not responsible for international conflicts, but they can relate to making peace in their families, schools, with friends, etc.

The children should leave today believing that we are waiting for a day of joy and peace and that there are things we can do to be ready for it.

