

First Sunday of Advent

Focus

A clock and an Advent calendar.

Introduction

Everyone knows that Jesus was born in Bethlehem more than 2000 years ago, but no one knows when he will return. In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us how important it is to be prepared for his return at an unexpected time and date, if we are to avoid being taken by surprise!

Gospel Acclamation

Light the Gospel candle and sing the Advent Acclamation:

He'll be coming back in glory when he comes,
he'll be coming back in glory when he comes.
As we listen to God's Word,
let his voice be heard,
fill our world with love as he comes.

(To the tune of 'She'll be coming round the mountain')

Gospel

A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (24:37-44)

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Just as the flood in Noah's time took people by surprise, so too will the Son of Man come when no one expects him. You must stay alert and be ready, because you do not know when your Master will return. If the owner of a house knew when the burglar planned to visit, then he would stay awake and keep guard. So you must always keep yourselves ready to welcome the Son of Man at an unexpected time.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, a time of waiting and preparation, of excitement and anticipation, when we get ready for the great feast of Christmas.

How many Sundays are left before Christmas Day?

(If you do not have an Advent wreath in the room, you could refer to the one in the Church and remind the children how many candles have been lit, and explain the significance and symbolism of the wreath.)

What sort of things are people busy doing so that they will be ready for Christmas Day?

Everyone gets caught up in the hustle and bustle of buying and wrapping presents, sending cards, planning meals and parties, and buying or baking cakes and mince pies.

How does Christmas make us feel?

For most people, Christmas is a time of joyful celebration, when we exchange presents and cards as a sign of love, and spend time together with friends and family. But we should also remember that Christmas can be a difficult time for some people who feel lonely or sad, people who are sick, and the homeless and poor.

Jesus told us that he would return one day. Did he give us an exact date or time? When should we expect him? Only God knows exactly when Jesus will come again at the end of time. It could be night or day, any time. That's why it's important to keep ourselves ready to welcome him at all times.

And how can we do that?

During Advent we are reminded that God loved the world so much that he sent Jesus his only Son to be our Saviour. Jesus came to show us the way to love God and one another, and to share that love with the world. If we try every day to love each other with kind words and thoughtful actions, then we will keep ourselves ready to welcome Christ at any time!

Activity

Make a card with a surprise inside! Cover up the figure of Jesus and photocopy the ark scene on to one half of an A4 sheet. Fold the sheet in half with the picture of the ark on the front cover. Photocopy and cut out the figure of Jesus. Fold a narrow strip of card or paper to create a 'spring', and glue or tape one end of this on to the back of Jesus and the other end on to the inside of the card. When you open the card, Jesus appears by surprise!

Intercessions

As brothers and sisters in one loving family, together let us pray to our heavenly Father:

For people who are lonely or sad at this joyful time of year.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who are hungry and have no home to call their own.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all of God's family in our own parish and throughout the world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For ourselves, that we will be ready to welcome Christ this Christmas and always.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Knowing that our heavenly Father is listening, in the silence of our hearts let us share our own unspoken prayers with him.

Silence

Loving Father,
hear our prayers,
fill us with your joyful love,
and keep us ready to welcome you,
in the name of Jesus the Lord.

Amen.

