



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

First Sunday of Advent

Children's Liturgy of the Word

BE READY AND PREPARED

Advent is a time of waiting, conversion and hopeful expectation that prepares us for the celebration of Christ's birth (Incarnation¹) at Christmas and for His glorious return at the end of time. The first two Sundays are a time of quiet waiting, and the last two are a period of active preparation for the birth of Christ. The Advent Wreath is a popular devotion during this liturgical season.² Other customs include Advent calendars, fasting, almsgiving and daily prayer.

The First Sunday of Advent reminds us to "wake up" and to "stay alert." This is a time when we prepare for Christ's first coming and look forward to His return with hope.

In the Gospel, Noah's Ark serves as a powerful symbol for both the family and the Church. First, it represents the family as the "domestic Church," just like Noah's family was saved from the flood. Second, the Ark symbolizes the Church, which is a place of salvation that unites everyone and is entered through Baptism, saving us from eternal death. Both the family and the Church are like "arks" that provide shelter, hope, and community against the dangers of the world.

¹ The incarnation is the historic Christian doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Second Person of the Trinity, that he has in time taken upon himself a complete human nature by being born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jack Kilcrease, "Jesus' Incarnation," in Lexham Survey of Theology, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

² Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), paragraph 98

Background

Isaiah 2:1-5 presents a vision of hope and universal peace, depicting a future where all nations gather to worship God and learn His ways, ultimately leading to the end of conflict and a call to walk in His light. The reading sets the tone for Advent, focusing on watchful anticipation of Christ's coming—both in His Incarnation at Christmas and His return in glory at the end of time. This vision fosters hope, reminding us that Advent is not a nostalgic longing, but an active conversion toward the peace that only God can bring.

Psalms 122 was traditionally sung by pilgrims as they journeyed to Jerusalem for major feasts. Jerusalem is not only a place of worship but also the center of communal life – symbolizing the Ark in the Gospel. The prayer for "peace" encompasses not only the absence of war but also holistic prosperity, justice, and harmony. The psalm inspires us to celebrate Advent themes of hope, vigilance, and preparation for Christ's coming, both at Christmas and at the end of time.

Romans 13:11-14 is a powerful urging from the Apostle Paul to the Christians in Rome, calling them to spiritual attention, moral reformation, and the embrace of Christ-like living, particularly in light of the imminent return of the Lord. The command to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" is the essence of Advent preparation—united with Him, that one's life shines with His light.

Matthew 24:37-44 highlights vigilance and readiness for the unexpected coming of the Son of Man. Jesus compares His coming to the days of Noah, when people were engrossed in their daily lives, unaware of the impending flood until it swept them away. The central message is: "Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." Spiritually, this passage is a powerful exhortation to a state of constant readiness. It is about living each day in a state of preparedness, as if Christ could come at any moment. This vigilance entails living a life in alignment with God's will, avoiding spiritual complacency, and being mindful of the ultimate accountability before God.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

Today, we begin Advent, which means “to come” and prepare for the coming of Jesus. Go with your leaders and listen to the readings and ways you can prepare for Jesus.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Lord, we thank You for this beautiful season of Advent. Help us to open our hearts, to listen for Your voice, and to share the joy of Your coming with everyone we meet.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah.

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz³ saw
concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house⁴
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion⁵ shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,⁶
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.
O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!
The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

³ Isaiah, son of Amoz, was a prophet who lived and worked in Jerusalem from about 750 to 700 BCE.

⁴ The temple was built on Mount Moriah, which was hence called the mountain of the Lord's house. express the public worship of the true God.

⁵ Zion refers then to Jerusalem. Zion is the place where Yahweh dwells, or at least may be reached, hence, in the first instance, the temple site.

⁶ A sharp iron blade attached to the beam of a plow. As instruments that can only be used in times of peace, they are contrasted to swords, also made of iron. Turning swords into plowshares demonstrates peace.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 122.1-2, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem. **R.**

To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
the thrones of the house of David. **R.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers." **R.**

For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say, "Peace be within you."
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good. **R.**

SECOND READING

Romans 13.11-14

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters,
you know what time it is,
how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.
For salvation⁷ is nearer to us now
than when we became believers;
the night is far gone, the day is near.
Let us then lay aside the works of darkness
and put on the armour of light;
let us live honourably as in the day,
not in revelling and drunkenness,
not in debauchery and licentiousness,
not in quarrelling and jealousy.
Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

⁷ God's activity on behalf of creation and especially humans to God's intended goal. It entails God's deliverance of human beings from the power and effects of sin and the Fall through the work of Jesus Christ so that creation in general and humans can enjoy the fullness of life intended for what God has made.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus spoke to his disciples:

"As the days of Noah ⁸ were,
so will be the coming of the Son of Man.⁹

For as in those days before the flood
they were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage,
until the day Noah entered the ark,
and they knew nothing
until the flood came and swept them all away,
so too will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Then two will be in the field;
one will be taken and one will be left.

Two women will be grinding meal together;
one will be taken and one will be left.

Keep awake, therefore,
for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

But understand this:
if the owner of the house had known
in what part of the night the thief was coming,
he would have stayed awake
and would not have let his house be broken into.

Therefore you also must be ready,
for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

The Gospel of the Lord.

⁸ During this time, people were preoccupied with earthly pleasures—eating, drinking, and living without fear of God while devoting themselves to empty pleasures and vanities.

⁹ Jesus uses this term to refer to himself, indicating his divine authority beyond just his human nature.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to hear the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

First Reading

We will now listen to our first reading again, but in a different way.

In a world full of busy people, there is a special mountain called God's Holy Hill. It isn't just any hill—it is the tallest and shiniest one, where the sky meets the earth, and God's house stands at the top like a big, welcoming castle.

One sunny day, kids from everywhere—faraway towns, big cities, and even across the ocean—started climbing the mountain. They came with their families, holding hands and singing songs. "Come on!" they cheered. "Let's go up to God's house and learn how to be friends!"

As they climbed higher, more and more people joined: kids with curly hair, straight hair, and braids; some in colourful clothes, others in simple ones. Everyone was different, but they all wanted the same thing—to hear God's wise words about being kind and sharing with others.

At the top, under the bright sun, a kind teacher (like a wise grandparent) gathered everyone around. "God says," he explained, "No more hitting or arguing! Let's turn our sticks and toys that hurt into tools that help—like plows for planting yummy veggies and hooks for picking flowers. Then, we can all play and work together without any mean fights!"

The kids gasped in wonder. They imagined swords turning into garden shovels, and spears into gentle rakes. No more wars—just happy games, shared lunches, and big hugs!

Finally, the whole crowd shouted together: "Let's walk in God's light! It's warm and bright, like a cozy blanket that keeps us safe and full of love." Hand in hand, they danced down the mountain, feeling peaceful and strong, ready to spread kindness everywhere.

That mountain is still calling us today—to climb toward God with our hearts and make the world a friendlier place!

Responsorial Psalm

We will now listen to the Responsorial Psalm again, but in a different way.

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

Let us go to the house of God.

Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem. **R.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

"Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers." **R.**

For the sake of my relatives and friends

I say, "Peace be within you."

For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good. **R.**

Second Reading

We will now listen to the second reading again, but in a different way.

Imagine you're in your bed, when suddenly an alarm clock rings. It's not just any morning; it's the start of the most exciting day ever, because something wonderful is coming soon.

One sunny morning, a group of sleepy kids in a little village heard a friendly angel's voice: "Wake up, everyone! Rub your eyes and get out of bed—it's time to get ready! The big, happy day when Jesus comes is almost here, closer than you think. Don't miss it by staying asleep!"

The kids yawned and stretched, giggling as they jumped to their feet. "Okay, Angel! What do we do now?" The angel smiled and said, "First, toss away all the yucky, shadowy things that make you tired and grumpy—like fighting with your brother and sisters, or watching too much TV or internet."

Instead, the angel handed them shiny outfits: "Put on your super-bright clothes! These are like armour made of goodness." One kid got a cape of kindness, another a helmet of honesty, and they all shared boots of bravery to help others. "No more hiding in the dark," the angel explained. "Live like it's daytime—play fair, share your toys, and be gentle with everyone, just like Jesus would."

The children dressed up and ran outside, feeling strong and sparkly. They helped a neighbour, shared their lunch with a new friend, and even said "I'm sorry" after a little bump during playtime. "We're ready for Jesus!" they cheered. And as the sun climbed high, their hearts glowed with joy, knowing they were prepared for the best surprise ever.

From that day on, the kids remembered: Every morning is a chance to wake up to God's love and shine like little stars!

Gospel

We will now listen to a reading from the Gospel of Matthew again, but in a different way.

Have you ever heard of Noah? He was a faithful man who obeyed God by building a huge boat called an Ark to save his family and all the animals from a great flood that would wash away the world's sin. Now, imagine a big storm is coming, but people are having a party and aren't thinking about the flood. They are doing things that they shouldn't do. When it started to rain, Noah and his family were safe inside the ark, while the others who disobeyed God were caught unprepared.

Jesus says we should be like Noah. We don't know when Jesus will return, so we must always be prepared. Jesus wants us to be ready for His return, just as Noah was ready when the flood came. He tells us that in those days, people were busy eating, drinking, and getting married, and they did not notice the danger coming, so when the flood arrived, they were taken by surprise. In the same way, we do not know when Jesus will return, so we must always be prepared and not taken by surprise.

Reflection: BE READY AND PREPARED

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

Good morning! Today is a very special Sunday. **Do you know why?** (Allow for answers.)

Tell me: what did you hear? (Allow for answers.)

Have you ever waited for something really exciting? (Allow for answers.)

Maybe for your birthday, or Christmas morning, or a special visitor?

How does it feel to wait? (Allow for answers.)

Sometimes waiting can be hard, right? However, it can also be very exciting because we know something wonderful is on the way! Today, our readings tell us about preparing for someone very, very special: Jesus!

The Prophet Isaiah talks about a special mountain, God's mountain, where everyone will go to learn about God's ways. And guess what? When everyone learns God's ways, they will turn their swords, which are used for fighting, into tools for farming, like plows and pruning hooks. This means there will be no more fighting, only peace!

Can you imagine a world without fighting, only peace? (Allow for answers.)

How would that feel? (Allow for answers.)

This mountain of peace is like Jesus and His Church. The Ark is a type of Church. When we follow Jesus, He teaches us how to live in peace with everyone. Advent is a time to remember that Jesus came to bring peace to our world.

Our second reading, from Saint Paul, tells us to "wake up!" It's like when your parents wake you up in the morning and say, "Time to get ready for the day!" Saint Paul says it's time for us to wake up from spiritual sleep and get ready for Jesus. He tells us to stop doing things that are not good, like arguing or being mean, and instead, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." This means trying to be like Jesus, being kind, loving, and helpful.

What are some good things we can "put on" or do to be more like Jesus this Advent? (e.g., sharing, helping, being kind).

In our Gospel, Jesus tells us a story about being ready. He says that His coming will be like the days of Noah, when people were living their lives, eating and drinking, and didn't realize a big flood was coming until it was too late. Jesus tells us to "Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." This doesn't mean we should stay up all night! This means that we should always be ready in our hearts for Jesus. We prepare ourselves by praying, being kind to others, listening to God's word, and striving to follow His ways to the best of our ability every day. We don't know exactly when Jesus will come again, but we know He will come, and we want to be ready to welcome Him with joyful hearts!

What is one thing you can do this week to help you be ready for Jesus? (e.g., say an extra prayer, help a parent, share a toy).

So, Advent is a time of exciting waiting and preparation! We wait for Jesus to come at Christmas, remembering His first coming, and we also prepare for His return at the end of time. Let's try our best to live in peace, "wake up, " be like Jesus, and always be ready for Him with happy and loving hearts.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

Alternate Reflection

Today, we begin a very special time in our Church year called Advent!

Have you ever seen one of these before? (Hold up or point to an Advent Wreath, or a picture of one).

This is called an Advent Wreath! It's a very special decoration we use in church and sometimes in our homes during Advent. It helps us remember what Advent is all about.

Look at the shape of our Advent Wreath. It's a circle, isn't it? A circle has no beginning and no end. This reminds us of God's love for us. God's love is unending; it never stops like a circle! And it was God's unending love that sent Jesus into the world to be with us.

Can you think of something else that is a circle and reminds you of something that never ends? (e.g., a ring, a wheel).

The wreath is usually made of green branches, like evergreen trees. Even when many other plants lose their leaves in winter, evergreens stay green. This reminds us that God's love and His promises are always alive, always fresh, and always full of hope, even when things might seem dark or cold.

What does the colour green make you think of? (e.g., nature, new life, growth).

Now, look at the candles on the wreath.

How many do you see? (Allow children to count: four).

These four candles are very important! We light one candle each Sunday in Advent. The candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World.

Today is the First Sunday of Advent, so we lit the first candle at the beginning of Mass. It reminds us of the long, long time people waited for Jesus to come, and it reminds us to get ready for Him. Just as a little light helps us see in the dark, Jesus came to light up our lives and show us the way to God.

How does light help us? (e.g., helps us see, makes us feel safe, warms us).

Each week, as we light another candle, the wreath gets brighter and brighter, just like our excitement and hope for Christmas grow!

Our readings today also discussed being ready for Jesus. They tell us to "wake up" and be prepared, just like we prepare for a special visitor. We prepare for Jesus by doing our best to be kind, share, help others, and

pray. These are ways we "light up" our own hearts for Jesus.

What is one way you can help your heart be ready for Jesus this week, like lighting a little candle inside you? (e.g., saying a prayer, helping a family member, being extra kind to a friend).

So, dear children, when you see an Advent Wreath, remember:

- The circle reminds us of God's unending love.
- The green reminds us of hope that never fades.
- And the candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World, and we are getting ready to welcome Him!

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Advent is a time of waiting and getting our hearts ready for Jesus. After each prayer, please respond, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' **R:** Come, Lord Jesus.

Assistant:

For the Church—for the Pope, bishops, priests and deacons, and all who help us grow in faith: that they guide us to watch and pray this Advent. **R:**

ASSISTANT:

For our world, for peace where there is fighting, that leaders be fair and kind. We pray to the Lord. **R:**

ASSISTANT:

For our neighbours in need—the hungry, homeless, lonely, or afraid: that we share what we have and be signs of God's love. We pray to the Lord. **R:**

ASSISTANT:

For the sick and those who suffer: that Jesus may bring them comfort and healing. We pray to the Lord. **R:**

ASSISTANT:

For our families—help us to be awake to your presence, make good choices, and show kindness to everyone. We pray to the Lord. **R:**

ASSISTANT:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause] We pray: Come, Lord Jesus.

THE LEADER SAYS:

Loving God, you hear the prayers of your children. Help us to be ready to welcome Jesus with joyful hearts. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
Canadian Conferences of Catholic Bishops, 2009, adapted for children.
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