

# First Sunday of Advent

## Be Alert! The Messiah Is Coming

**Focus:** To turn to God and be saved.

### Lectionary Vol. I

Isaiah 63:16–17; 64:1,  
3–8

Psalms 79:2–3, 15–16,  
18–19

1 Cor 1:3–9

Mark 13:33–37

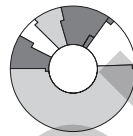
### Leader's Context

As Advent begins, we hear today's reading from Mark calling us to be watchful and alert. What a great message for our busy lives! We live our fast-paced days as if our time on earth will go on forever. We realise that God will come again, and we need to be ready to meet him. It is especially important (yet difficult) to guide young people during these Advent days since they may already be distracted by the secular trappings of Christmas and the summer break to come.

Commercials on television and displays in stores may already have the young people thinking about what they would like for Christmas. Help them to respond, "To be ready for the coming of the Lord!"

### Focus on Church Teaching

Each one of us has a call from God that we receive at our Baptism. Because we are anointed priest, prophet, and king, we are called to lead lives of holiness and prophetic witness and resolve to bring about the world's sanctification (USCCA, 138). We work for justice and peace because of love; love is what brings about development in each person and in humanity. This love is modelled for us in Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection (CIV, 1).



### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Ask students to find today's date on the liturgical calendar. What liturgical season begins today? What is the liturgical colour for the season? Use the "Introduction to Advent" on page 1 to help guide your discussion, talking about what the season means, how we celebrate it, and how it helps us to prepare our hearts and lives to welcome Christ our Lord.

### Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.**

### Gospel Acclamation

Psalms 85:8

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

Lord, show us your mercy and love,  
and grant us your salvation.

**Alleluia!**

### Gospel

Mark 13:33–37

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling

abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!’

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Gospel Reflection

### Staying on Alert!

☺ Have you ever had the experience of waiting for someone special to come? Maybe a relative you hadn’t seen for a long time, or perhaps someone you’ve never met before but were excited to meet, like a baby brother or sister?

☺ What was that experience of watching and waiting like?

We all know what it means to wait, especially when that waiting is filled with anticipation, like when we wait for guests to arrive, or when family and friends come to celebrate a birthday or holiday. Often, we find ourselves so excited we just can’t even sit down. We keep looking out the window to see the first signs of their arrival, their car approaching the driveway.

While the primary focus of Advent is to prepare ourselves spiritually to celebrate Christmas, there are really two distinct parts to the season. During the first two weeks of Advent the Scripture readings are intended to help us reflect not on the first coming of Christ but on his second coming at the end of time. Jesus reminds us a number of times in the Gospels that it is not possible to know the time of our individual ends

or the end of the world. The prophets of the Old Testament, and especially Isaiah, have told us about his coming. God had promised that the Messiah would come. People have waited and looked forward to this coming of the Messiah for hundreds of years. But we know he has come, so our Advent waiting has an assurance that increases our excitement and anticipation. When we first hear this, it might sound scary, yet God’s decision to withhold this information from us is actually a gift. It is God’s way of reminding us that what is most important is how we live today.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus is clear: “Be on your guard! Stay awake!” It doesn’t mean just sitting around and doing nothing while you wait. Rather, we are being reminded that there’s no time like the present to be good disciples. Once Jesus comes again—whenever that might be—we wouldn’t want him to catch us “sleeping” or, worse, behaving in ways unlike Christ. Jesus asks us to imagine a servant awaiting his master’s arrival from a journey. The servant doesn’t know exactly what time of day or what day the master will return, so the servant must be ready at all times to greet the master when he does.

☺ How can Advent be a time for us to prepare ourselves for the time when we will meet Jesus face to face?

☺ Your houses might be decorated with many lights. How do you become ‘light’ for those around you?

☺ You buy many gifts and wrap them beautifully. What are the gifts you bring to your family, school, or community?

☺ If Jesus came today, what would he find on earth?

## Advent Wreath

You will need paper plates, green tissue paper, pencils, scissors, glue or tape, and construction paper (colours purple, pink, and orange) to lead this activity.

Give each student a paper plate. Help the students to make three violet and one rose 'candles' for their Advent wreaths by rolling small tubes out of violet and pink construction paper and taping them closed. Then, show the students how to cut small flame shapes out of the orange construction paper that can be glued or taped inside the candles. (On this First Sunday of Advent, they should glue or tape a flame into one of the violet candles. The rest of the flames may be taken home to be attached on the subsequent Sundays of Advent.) Next, have the students glue the candles to their plates so that they stand upright. Finally, show them how to add some green to their wreaths by tearing off small pieces of green tissue paper, twisting these pieces around the eraser end of a pencil, and then gluing these twisted pieces the paper plate. Leave the centre section of the paper plate empty, representing a 'hole' in the wreath.

Instruct the students that, at home, they may glue the remaining flames to the candles, one each Sunday until the end of Advent. The rose candle should be 'lit' on the Third Sunday of Advent.

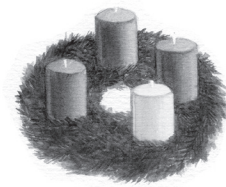
## What If Jesus Came Today?

Have the students imagine that today Jesus is coming to visit your classroom. Have them consider these questions: What preparations would you need to make now, before he gets there? What questions would you want to ask Jesus? What questions might Jesus ask of your class? What might Jesus enjoy doing with your group during his visit?

Give the students some time to think about these questions silently, and then have them form small groups of three or four to discuss. After a few minutes, invite groups to share their discussions. Conclude by reminding the students that Advent is a time when we make ourselves ready to celebrate the arrival of Jesus. We prepare our houses when we are receiving company. We also need to prepare our hearts to receive Jesus.

# Living the Liturgy at Home

## First Sunday of Advent



### Scripture Readings

Isaiah 63:16–17; 64:1, 3–8

Psalms 79:2–3, 15–16, 18–19

1 Cor 1:3–9

Mark 13:33–37

### Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you are Emmanuel, God with us.  
In these holy days of Advent,  
come to your people  
with justice, healing, and peace.  
Fill us with a spirit of love and  
generous service,  
so that our hearts will be ready to  
celebrate your coming at Christmas  
and our lives will reflect your Kingdom  
that will last forever when you  
come again.  
You live and reign with  
God the Father,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### Did You Know?

... that during Advent, Catholic Christians anticipate and celebrate Christ's coming in three different ways: the Messiah's Second Coming at the end of time as we know it, Jesus' coming as an infant in Bethlehem some two thousand years ago, and Christ's coming once again into our hearts this Christmas as we welcome Emmanuel ('God with us')?

### Conversation Questions

- ☺ We are called to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. We are all called to holiness and to be active disciples of Jesus in the world because we have a crucial role as 'priest, prophet, and king.' Specifically, how might we, as a family, prepare our hearts and lives during Advent?
- ☺ How can we each be better about turning ourselves more to God in moments when we are 'falling asleep' on the watch?

### Faith in Action

As we await the coming of Christ Jesus, have your family 'adopt' another family in need. Inquire at your parish office or at your local charity how your family may provide gift of clothing, toiletries, food, or toys and books for children. Include your child in selecting gifts.



# Solemnity of Saint Patrick (Feast in New Zealand)

March 17

## Lectionary Vol. I

Jeremiah 1:4–9

Psalms 116

Acts 13:46–49

Luke 10:1–12, 17–20

## Send forth Peace

**Focus: Persistence in faith.**

### Leader's Context

By commemorating St Patrick, the Church praises the extraordinary missionary efforts of the bishop who converted Celtic pagan Ireland to Christianity. Jesus sends forth missionaries in today's Gospel, warning them that their task will not be easy, and that their message and the peace they bring with it may not always be accepted. He calls on his followers to be persistent in their faith and to continue their missionary efforts courageously, shaking off the dust of failures and moving on to spread the Good News and the offer of peace to people who are open to receiving it.

### Focus on Church Teaching

Judges 6:24 states that "The Lord is Peace." Peace is a fundamental characteristic of God. The Second Vatican Council instructs that earthly peace between neighbours "symbolises and results from the peace of Christ which radiates from God the Father..." and directs that "All Christians are urgently summoned to do in love what the truth requires, and to join with all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and bringing it about." (GS, 78) Jesus' instruction to the seventy-two disciples to extend an offer of peace to every house they enter, requires them to have courage as they engage in an act of faith, not knowing whether the peace they bring with them will be accepted. Jesus' followers are asked to trust in his word that making an offer of peace is

still worthwhile regardless of whether it is accepted or rejected.



### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Invite your students to find today's date on the liturgical calendar. On March 17 the universal church commemorates and celebrates St Patrick, bishop and patron saint of Ireland and a saint of great importance in Australia where he is celebrated with a Solemnity and in Aotearoa New Zealand where he is celebrated with a Feast. Many Irish Catholics emigrated to Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand from the nineteenth century onward, and because so many Australians and New Zealanders have Irish descendants, St Patrick holds a prominent place in our local liturgical calendars.

### Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

### Gospel Acclamation

Luke 4:18–19

**Alleluia, alleluia. (During Lent: Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!)**

The Lord sent me to bring Good News to the poor and freedom to prisoners.



**Alleluia. (During Lent: Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!)**

## Gospel

Luke 10:1–12, 17–20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

The Lord appointed seventy two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. He said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road, Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!" And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you. Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The Kingdom of God is near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into the streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the Kingdom of God is very near." I tell you, on that day it will not go as hard with Sodom as with that town.'

The seventy-two came back rejoicing, 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils submit to us when we use your name.' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Yes, I have given you power to tread underfoot serpents and scorpions and the whole strength of the enemy; nothing shall ever hurt you. Yet do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you; rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## Gospel Reflection

### Try, try and try again

Have you ever tried something new and done a really poor job? It might be that your Grandma is teaching you how to bake an apple pie. She makes it look so easy, because she has had lots of practice and knows some tricks for how to do it just right. But when you try it for the first time, you might be a bit scared about how it might go, and you might not do a very good job. Your pie might not look like a pie, or the pastry might not be cooked properly. You can choose how to react when you don't do a good job that first time.

☺ How might you react?

You can be hard on yourself because you didn't do it so well, or you can say: 'Well at least I tried, and with a bit of practice, one day, I'll be just as good as Grandma at baking an apple pie.'

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks his followers to do something they haven't done before and he gives them a warning, saying that when they try really hard to bring peace to the houses of people who haven't heard the Good News before, their offer of peace may not be accepted. They might not do a good job of spreading the Good News when they first try to do it. Jesus doesn't blame them if that happens. Jesus encourages them by saying that if their efforts are not well received, they are to shake the dust of that place from their feet and move on to the next place and keep trying to spread the Good News there. Jesus tells them that spreading peace is not easy – they will be like lambs among wolves – and that they should keep trying until their efforts are rewarded.

Trying again and again to spread peace like St Patrick did in bringing the Good News of Jesus to Ireland, is a necessary part of being a faithful Christian. When we first start trying to be a peace-maker like Jesus asks us to be, we might not be successful, and if our efforts at making peace are not accepted by others, Jesus asks us not to give up, but to keep on trying. Eventually, our efforts will be rewarded, when those to whom we offer peace, accept that offer, and learn to be at peace with us.

## Glory Be

For this activity you will need an outline of a 3-leafed clover copied onto sheets of A4 paper and colouring and writing implements.

Saint Patrick is associated with the Shamrock, or three-leafed clover which is a key symbol for helping Christians to understand the mystery of the Trinity. Provide each student with an outline of the Shamrock and talk about its symbolism in relation to the Trinity, one God in three persons.

Explain to the students that one of the simplest but best prayers Catholics pray is the 'Glory Be,' which we can pray whenever we want to praise and thank our Trinitarian God. Invite them to listen while you pray the prayer: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." Then ask the students to write in a dark colour on the Shamrock, the parts of the Glory Be prayer that are about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (one person of the Trinity on each leaf), while you slowly repeat the prayer. At the base of the Shamrock, have the students write down the end of the prayer. If there is time, invite the students to colour-in their Shamrocks, and pray the 'Glory Be' prayer together.

## Find the Trinity in the Creed

For this activity you will need three large pieces of butcher-paper and writing implements or three sections of whiteboard and markers, and copies of the Nicene Creed for each student.

The Nicene Creed can be a long prayer for young people to learn and understand. A way to make it easier to remember and understand is to break it up into its main sections. Invite the students to form three equal groups and give each group copies of the Nicene Creed. Invite group one to study the Nicene Creed and write down everything they can find about God the Father (remind them that some of this could be found in the section on Jesus). Group two is to look for and write down all they can find about God the Son (Jesus Christ). Group three is to look for and write down all they can find about God the Holy Spirit and other topics in the Creed that are not related to the Father or the Son. Once the groups have finished, ask them to share what they have found using what they have written on the paper/board. Take special note of what the groups identify as elements of the Creed that they don't understand so that you can work on explaining those in a future class. Then pray the Creed together as a group.



# Living the Liturgy at Home

## Solemnity of Saint Patrick (Feast in New Zealand)

March 17

### Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 1:4–9

Psalms 116

Acts 13:46–49

Luke 10:1–12, 17–20

### Prayer

O God who calls on us to send forth peace  
not knowing whether it will be  
accepted or rejected,  
give us courage like St Patrick, we  
pray,  
to continue trying to spread peace in  
your name  
so that our world may live in harmony.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus  
Christ your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### ?? Did You Know?

While little historical detail is available about St Patrick, he is understood to have been a fifth-century missionary of Roman-British descent who was sent as bishop-apostle to Ireland, where he was tasked with converting to Christianity a pagan culture whose belief system was based on a polytheistic Celtic worldview in which multiple local deities were worshiped. His missionary success yielded legends such as his being responsible for Ireland having no snakes because he banished them by driving them into the sea after they attacked him when he was in the midst of a 40-day period of prayer and fasting.

### Conversation Questions

☉ In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his followers that they will be like lambs among wolves when they are sent out to spread the Good News. Have you ever felt like a lamb among wolves as a Christian in a secular society?

☉ What elements of Christian teaching will help to give you strength when you feel like a lamb among wolves in offering peace to someone who may not welcome it?

### Faith in Action

Before we receive Communion at Mass, we are invited to share a Sign of Peace with the people around us. Sometimes this act can become routine, habitual or unthinking, and we can lose focus on its true meaning. Next time you are at Mass and are invited to share a Sign of Peace, make eye contact with the person whose hand you are holding as you say "Peace be with you" and remember Jesus' instruction to send forth peace, as you make your extension of peace to them truly intentional.