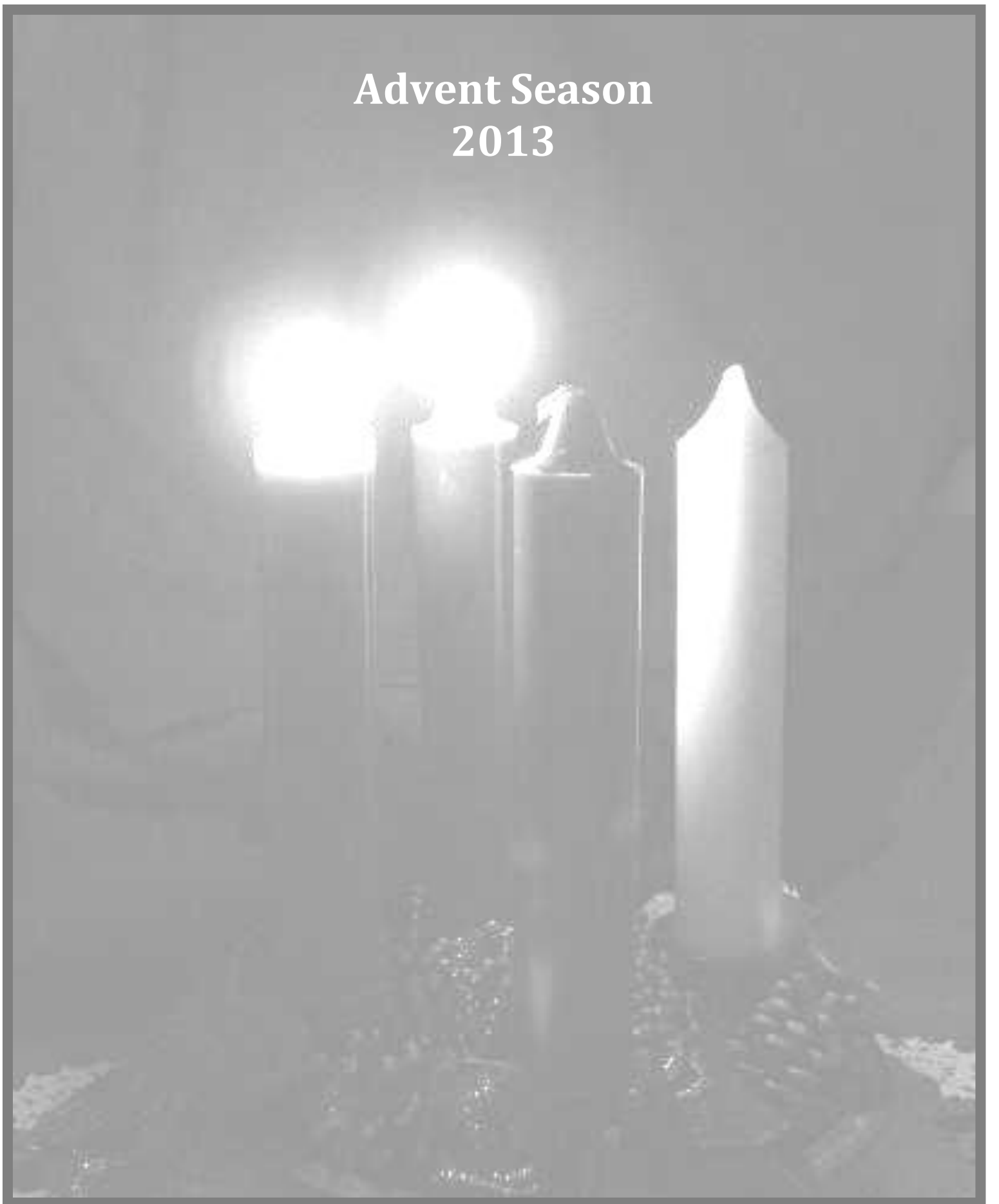


Advent Season 2013



Introduction

The Church's year is structured around the life of Jesus Christ, his birth, his ministry, his death and his resurrection. The Liturgical calendar follows the seasons of the year and also reflects the seasons of our own lives.

The Liturgical year begins with Advent – a time of preparation for the celebration of Christmas. It is a time of waiting and recognising, of hope and of joy.

The Advent Wreath

The primary symbol for the Advent season is the Advent wreath. The popular tradition is to place four Advent candles in a circle and light one to observe each week leading up to the celebration of Christmas. A fifth Advent candle in the centre is lit on Christmas Day. The purple colours represent contemplation and penance. The rose colour represents joy. We light the rose candle on Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent. The white candle in the centre represents celebration, love and peace.



The Wreath is an important Advent symbol. It is made in the form of a ring. The ring is a symbol of eternity, since it has no beginning or end. It acts as a symbol for God who has no beginning or end.

Advent itself is a time when we prepare for the coming of Christ. As we light each of the candles on the wreath over the next few weeks we reflect on what Advent means in our own lives.



Did you know...?

Advent was established in the sixth century by Pope Gregory.

Catholic priests wear purple on the first, second and fourth week. During the third week they wear rose.

Using this Resource

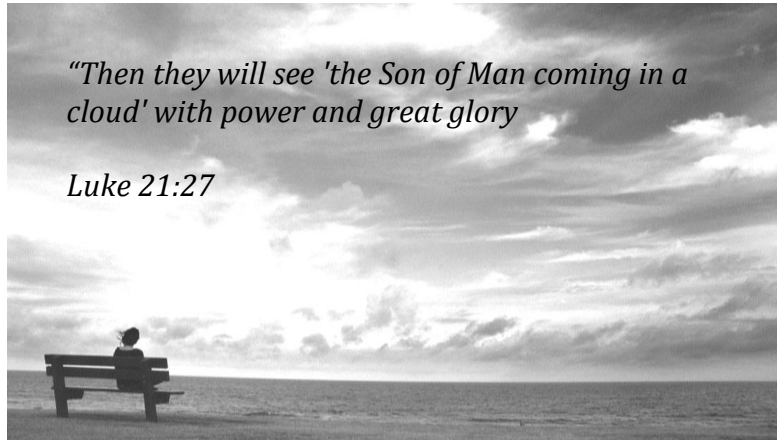
This Advent resource is structured around four prayer services – one for each week of Advent.

Every service begins with the lighting of the Advent Wreath which should be placed in a prominent position.

The hymns suggested are the traditional Christmas hymns. These are accessible to most students and teachers. However, we would encourage you to use those hymns which are familiar and meaningful to you and your pupils.

2nd December: First Sunday of Advent

Theme for week 1: Advent is a time of waiting



Reflection

Advent is a time of waiting. We often find ourselves waiting for things in life, sometimes with impatience and sometimes in excited anticipation. Advent is a time when we look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Preparations for Christmas can be busy. Unfortunately, rather than being a time of quiet reflection, during which we look forward to the Light of Christ coming into the world, these few weeks can become a time of hectic preparation for a very commercial Christmas!

But Advent is the time to come and rest, to find comfort and peace in our God. We can make this a time of personal preparation by using moments of waiting as moments for prayer – walking to and from school, in the queue for lunch; while waiting for the bus or waiting to meet a friend.

Rather than allowing impatience to overcome us, perhaps we could begin to see these spaces as gift; time to stop rushing; time to be still.

Waiting teaches us to be patient. By acknowledging Advent as a time of waiting, of hopeful expectation, of preparation, our Christmas will be all the more meaningful and enjoyable. Our waiting is always in hope and in this season of Advent, we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Over to you . . .

- How can you make this season a time of personal preparation?
- How can you include moments of prayer in your daily life?

Suggested Hymn:

Concluding Prayer around the wreath

God our Father, you loved us so much that you sent your only son into the world to be our savior and friend. Bless us as we wait for the coming of your Son. Open our hearts so that we may recognise him when he comes and make him welcome - whatever form he might take. Bless this wreath which represents our waiting, our hope, our recognition and welcome of God's presence in our world. We make this prayer through your Son Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen

9th December: Second Sunday of Advent



Theme for week 2: Advent is a time of hope

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God “

Luke 3: 5-6

May We Become...

May we become a light for those in darkness,
A source of hope for those in despair,
A companion for those who are burdened,
A peacemaker for those who are gripped with anger,
A selfless giver for those who are without,
A compassionate friend for those who mourn,
A protector for those without protection,
A bridge for those separated from love.
On this day and onwards,
May we become fully human, fully alive in the Spirit. Amen

Over to you . . .

How can you be a source of hope to those around you?

Concluding Prayer

God our Father, you loved us so much that you sent your only son into the world to be our saviour and friend. Bless us as we wait for the coming of your Son. Open our hearts so that we may recognise him and make him welcome when he comes - whatever form he might take. We make this prayer through your Son Jesus Christ you lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen

16th December: Third Sunday of Advent

Theme for week 3: Advent is a time to recognise the presence of Jesus Christ in our world today



Luke 3: 15 - 18

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Reflection

John the Baptist was the older cousin of Jesus. At that time and in that region he was famous and had many disciples. Yet John the Baptist, the man who had such influence on the people of his time still had his moments of darkness. Imprisoned in Herod's dungeon he begins to have doubts, "was I wrong about Jesus – is he really the Messiah, the one sent by the Father to save us?" So he sends messengers to Jesus. Jesus does not send back reassurances or persuasive arguments. He just asks the messengers to open their eyes and see the evidence of Jesus' life.



Over to you . . .

- Where is there evidence of Jesus' life around you?
- How can you open your eyes and ears to the presence of Jesus in your own life?



Did you know...?

The word advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means arrival or coming.

Concluding Prayer

God our Father, you loved us so much that you sent your only son into the world to be our saviour and friend. Bless us as we wait for the coming of your Son. Open our hearts so that we may recognise him and make him welcome when he comes - what ever form he might take. We make this prayer through your Son Jesus Christ you lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen

23rd December: Fourth Week of Advent

Theme for week 4: Advent is a time of welcome for Jesus into our hearts and our homes

Luke 1:39 – 45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."



Intercession prayer

Reader: Elizabeth welcomed Mary, as the mother of Jesus into her home. We pray that our hearts and homes and our world may be flooded with the grace of the Lord's coming.

Response: Come, Lord Jesus.

After each intercession we pray the response together

Reader(s):

Come into our hearts
Come into our homes
Come to those who are lonely
Come to those who are fearful
Come to those who are sick
Come to those who are poor.
Come to those who are grieving
Come to those who have no faith
Come to those who have no hope
Come to victims of violence
Come to those in the grip of addiction
Come to those in prison
Come to us in our needs this Christmas [pause].

Leader: Lord our God, listen to our prayers. May your Son in his coming banish the darkness of our world and shine his light into our hearts and our homes. May we help to brighten that light in all we do and say this Christmas.

Suggested Hymn: Come O Come Emmanuel

God our Father, you loved us so much that you sent your only son into the world to be our saviour and friend. Bless us as we wait for the coming of your Son. Open our hearts so that we may recognize him and make him welcome when he comes - whatever form he might take. We make this prayer through your Son Jesus Christ you lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen

