

Fourth Sunday of Advent Year A – 18th December 2022

Introduction

Today is the fourth Sunday of Advent. What does Advent mean? It means “coming”. We are preparing for the birth of the baby Jesus on Christmas Day.

(A suggested activity for Advent is to prepare an Advent wreath to be used at Children’s Liturgy – a smaller version than the one used in the church. If you are not able to do this, then make a picture of an Advent wreath, by cutting out leaf shapes from green card and arranging them in a circle and sticking them to a sheet of card. Next draw and cut out four candles, three purple and one vibrant pink candle and stick these (one per week) onto the picture of the wreath. Each week of Advent we will describe the wreath and discuss its’ meaning. If you have a real wreath we will also light a candle each week. (If you have a picture stick a new picture of a candle on each week!)

As part of your weekly introduction during Advent ask the children to look at the wreath and explain or remind them of what it represents.

Firstly, the wreath is circular to symbolize that God’s love for us has no end. It is everlasting.

The leaves of the wreath are GREEN, the colour that represents hope.

There are four candles (three purple – repentance, and one vibrant pink – a symbol of joy for the third Sunday of Advent known as Gaudete Sunday). There is a centre white candle to be lit on Christmas Day!

The bright light of each candle represents Jesus our “light” the “light” of the world. We explain that we will light a candle on the wreath each Sunday in Advent. Today, as we light the fourth candle, we pray to Jesus asking Him to come into our hearts, that we may know and love Him and following His gentle example, become more like Him, that we may bring His “light” to the people in our lives.

Make the Sign of the Cross – a sign of the love God has for us.

(This is optional, as we have already done this at the start of Holy Mass, but for young children it helps to demonstrate and practice

how to do this correctly). Also serves as a reminder that although they have left the main body of the Church they are still participants in the Mass.

Light the three purple candles and the pink one (and light the candles on the table next to the Lectionary. An adult lights the candles).

Penitential Act

Ask the children to think about how they have behaved in the past week, and if they have been kind to each other, helpful to parents, brothers, or sisters, listened to their teachers etc. For the times when we have not behaved as we should we say sorry to God.

Lead the children in singing the “sorry song”.

We are sorry,
Truly sorry,
Heal us Lord, (sung to tune of Frère Jacques)
In Your love,
Help us to do better,
Help us to be kinder.
Forgive us,
Forgive us.

All stand to welcome the Gospel singing the **Gospel Acclamation:**

Alleluia, Alleluia,
Holy Spirit,
Through Your power,
Mary had a baby, (same tune as above)
Jesus Son of God.
Emmanuel!
Alleluia!

Gospel

Select the correct Gospel from the Children’s Lectionary. This week it’s on page 9 of “Sunday. Book of Readings. The Lectionary Adapted for Children.” (Year A)

Matthew 1:18 - 24

“A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew”.

Explain and demonstrate – make three crosses: one on your forehead, one on your lips and one on your heart (in this way we think God’s word, speak God’s word and keep God’s word in our hearts) **as we say together “Glory to You, O Lord.”**

Read the Gospel aloud to the children. At the end say:

“The Gospel of the Lord”.

All reply: **“Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ”.**

Ask everyone to be seated.

Lead a Discussion on the Gospel

Who was the man in today’s Gospel and what happened in the dream that he had?

The man was St Joseph. He was due to marry Mary, but had just found out that she was expecting a baby. She told Him that this had happened by the power of the Holy Spirit and that an Angel called Gabriel had visited her some time ago with a request from God to ask her if she would give agree to be the Mother of Jesus. Mary told Joseph that she had agreed.

Joseph was afraid and he was not sure that it was still all right for him to marry Mary. In fact he had decided not to. However, he had a dream in which an Angel told Him not to be afraid to marry Mary. The angel told St Joseph that everything that Mary had told him was true. The angel said that Mary would have a baby boy and that they must name Him Jesus. The angel said that Jesus, the son of God, was the one who would “save His people from their sins.”

What was the other name that the prophet Isaiah used for Jesus?

He called Him Emmanuel?

What does Emmanuel mean?

It means "God is with us."

Then ask the children in what way they are preparing for the celebration of Jesus' birth on Christmas day.

Prayers of the Faithful (optional/ time dependent)

You may wish to prepare some of these yourselves or ask the children for their prayers. Here are some suggestions for today:

Dear Jesus, Help us we pray, to prepare well this Advent so that we may always be **ready** to show our love for You in our daily lives, in our thoughts, prayers and actions.

Lord, in Your mercy.

All reply: "**Hear our prayer.**"

Dear Jesus, Help us we pray, to be **awake** to the needs of others by being thoughtful, kind and helpful.

Lord, in Your mercy.

All reply: "**Hear our prayer.**"

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, help us to thank Mary for saying "yes" to God by becoming Your mother on the first Christmas Day, for bringing your love to all the world.

Hail Mary...

Amen.

Now ask for volunteers for the Offertory Procession. After the procession, children return quietly to sit with their families in church.