



First Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33: 14-16 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'"

Some things to think about...

This week is the first week of Advent, a time when we prepare for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. The Church's colour for Advent is purple. The colour purple signifies hope, longing and preparation - during Advent we wait with hope and longing for the birth of Jesus.

Activity

During Advent we are called to prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus, when we are reminded of God's great love for everyone. Christmas can be a very stressful and tough time for many people who are experiencing poverty, loneliness and hardship. As Mini Vinnies, we can prepare for Christmas by bringing God's love to those in need, which will bring us closer to God too!

On a sheet of large paper, make a list of the ways your Mini Vinnies group can prepare to encounter God at Christmas time by doing good deeds for other people. You may wish to make a 'To-Do' list for each of the 4 weeks of Advent and tick off the lists as you achieve each task.

Teacher's Notes

The season of Advent is one of waiting and expectation. This week's readings from Jeremiah and Luke speak of being on the lookout. In Luke's Gospel we hear the words 'stay awake', which means we need to be always ready to see where God's love is needed and how we can help.

The colour for Advent is purple as it is a season of preparation. Purple signifies a time of expectancy and hope-filled longing for the incarnation of our loving God, as God becomes fully human and enters our world. We are reminded of this through the name for Jesus, which is 'Emmanuel', meaning God with us.

In the lead up to Christmas, we prepare our gifts to give, but we can also prepare ourselves by trying to be kinder and more generous.

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Second Sunday of Advent

Luke 3: 1 a, 2-6 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'

Some things to think about...

John the Baptist calls on us to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Jesus. As Christians we strive to recognise Christ in everyone we meet. One of the ways we can prepare for the coming of Christ at Christmas is to make a special effort to show our love and care for those around us.

Activity

If you haven't done so already, print off a copy of the Mini Vinnies' Reverse Advent Calendar from the website and plan how this could be used in your school/parish. Why not share with your school community what you intend to do with the calendar and the items collected? Write a prayer that you can use in a Celebration of the Word, remembering those less fortunate in your school community.

Teacher's notes:

Luke's Gospel tells us about the opening of Jesus' ministry as foretold by John the Baptist. John calls on us to prepare our hearts and lives for the coming of the Lord. - (Spiritual Reflection Guide Oct-Dec 2006)

We begin this second week of Advent by celebrating the great news that God so loves us that He sent His son Jesus to tell us how to live in His love. This is good news because sometimes we get caught up in the mistakes and wrong ways of living. Jesus came to save us from that by showing us what is really important, which is to try and share God's love with others through acts of kindness and compassion. It is a hard lesson to learn and needs to be prepared for so that it can be understood.

Sunday's Gospel tells us about John the Baptist, who came to prepare people for Jesus and His message of love. A message which will straighten out our crooked ways of thinking, enabling us to recognise the wrong things we do and take Jesus and His message to our hearts.

We reflect on what He told us, the example He set for us, all He did for others, His suffering, dying and rising from the dead. Love of God is intrinsically connected to love of neighbour. Subsequently, our readiness to encounter and love our neighbour makes us open to God as well. This is one way we can prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

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Third Sunday of Advent

Luke 3: 10-16

And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" "And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."

Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Some things to think about...

In this reading, John the Baptist speaks to three different groups of people who, in some ways, hold power over others. His core message to each group is to be just and to share what they have with others. If your Mini Vinnies group were to ask John the Baptist 'What should we do?', what do you think he would say?

Activity

Think of three groups of people in our society who are in positions of power (e.g. parents, politicians, teachers, company bosses etc.)

Draw and label a picture of each of these groups in the middle of separate pieces of large paper. For each group, write some of the things you think John the Baptist would say to them if they were to ask him "What should we do?"

Teacher's Notes

In this reading, different groups in the crowd ask for direction from John the Baptist as to how they should live. John the Baptist's answers focus on being kind, just, and virtuous. John the Baptist tells the crowd that they should share what they have with others.

An important element of the St Vincent de Paul Society's Mission Statement is to encourage members to share who they are and what they have with the poor on a person-to-person basis. As Christians and as members of Mini Vinnies, we are asked to share our time and possessions with others, especially at Christmas.

You may wish to read the following to students to get them to focus on some of the small ways that they can share with others:

I was hungry and you shared your lunch with me;

I was thirsty and you gave me half your drink;

I was cold and you loaned me your jumper;

I was different and you told the others not to make fun of me;

I was sick and you explained my homework to me;

I was lonely and you invited me into your group of friends.

As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.

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Fourth Sunday of Advent

Luke 1: 39 – 45

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

Some things to think about...

This week is a time to think about the brave choice that Mary made when she said yes to God's invitation to be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God.

Elizabeth's exclamation, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!", reminds us of the greeting Mary received from the Angel Gabriel.

Why was Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit?

Think about the words of the Hail Mary. What do they tell us about the person of Mary?

Activity

This short passage contains lots of "action" words, or verbs. Highlight the action words, and talk about how they make the passage so happy and exciting.

As Mini Vinnies we are asked to see, think, do. Take time to reflect on all the actions you have already taken during Advent. Can you write them down? Maybe check your Reverse Advent Calendar?

Teacher's Notes

In this reading, Elizabeth says that when she heard Mary's voice the baby leaped in her womb. The Holy Spirit has given her understanding of what has been promised to Mary. Elizabeth is in awe of Mary, "the mother of my Lord", because she has trusted that what God promised will come to be. Mary's answer to Elizabeth is called the Magnificat. (Luke 1: 46- 53)

You may want to look at her words with the children. As Christians, and especially as Mini Vinnies, we are asked, like Mary, to trust God. We are asked to place everything in God's hands, and to believe that He will help us if we don't know what to do.

You may want to learn the song, "Father I place into your hands" (Hymns Old & New). As Mini Vinnies, we can do lots of practical things to help those who need our help. But some problems, like wars, are beyond our practical capabilities.

So, the children need to understand the need for prayer, to ask God to help us and to help when we don't know what we can do.

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