

1st Sunday of Advent, Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.

'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'

(Luke 21:25–28, 34–36)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Advent is the beginning of the Church's liturgical year.
- The Advent period is concerned with 'waiting' for the coming of the Christ child.
- A recurring theme in the gospels read during Advent is looking towards the end times, when Christ will come again.
- Today begins the cycle of readings for Year C in the Lectionary. This means that most of the gospel readings are taken from the Gospel of Luke.
- The Advent wreath is one way of preparing for the coming of the Christ child. The circle of greenery is a symbol of God's love, without beginning or end, while the candles represent the four weeks of preparation time. One candle is lit each Sunday during Advent, and the final, central candle is lit on Christmas Day.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The Gospel of Luke is written for a Gentile church community who is living in an 'in-between' time. The early Christians believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent—that Jesus would return soon as the Lord of Glory. As time passed, they had to rethink this belief. In this text, Luke addresses a community who can contemplate the history of Jesus and the Church while also looking forward to his future coming as the Son of Man. The text focuses on how Christians should live in this 'in-between' time. They must be attentive to the Gospel and live in readiness to meet their God. They must not be distracted by the cares and snares of the world, but instead be ready to stand confidently before the Son of Man.

- What are the things in your life that distract you from the Gospel?
- What are some of the strategies that make it easier to be attentive to the important things in life?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- In your life, what things have been 'sprung on you suddenly'? How did you deal with such surprises?
- What does it mean to 'stand with confidence before the Son of Man'?
- Share with each other some of your hopes and fears for the future. Are there particular goals you have set for yourself? How are you preparing for the future? What would you like that future to hold for you? Do you see it as a time of uncertainty, or do you look forward with confidence?
- This week, be attentive to the time you spend in waiting—in traffic, on the phone, to cross the road, for the kettle to boil. Use these small moments of waiting to focus on, and prepare yourself for, the coming of Christ at Christmas.
- Repeat the gospel acclamation often this week:

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

