###  LSW

children

*What do people do to welcome in a new year?* We clean up the house (If you don’t do it after the Christmas mess, you do it before the Christmas mess). *Why do we clean up the house?* It is nice to welcome in a New Year with a clean house very much like how we have a thorough bath and put on new clothes for festivals or big occasions. We also clean up the house because we have guests coming, some of them to stay. Wouldn’t we want our friends and relatives to see a clean house? Discuss how we clean up the house.

Explain that it is very much like that in the church. Jesus is coming on Christmas Day to visit and we all need to clean up our house to welcome this most important visitor on his birthday. Discuss what we need to get clean for him to feel welcome. *We need to get our souls cleaned up.* Discuss how we do that – by doing good and making sure we say sorry to our family and friends for anything wrong we did to them; we make sure we do good and love all those important to us and anyone else who needs love; we remember to say our prayers.

Year A

**First Sunday in Advent**

**Images**

Starting a new year

**Points to note**

This week we welcome in a new liturgical year by discussing the sign of Jesus coming. Children may get confused with having a new year that is not on the first of January – more so when this new year comes before Christmas and not after it.

In East Asia, Lunar New Year is preceded by an intense period of house cleaning, often performed to avoid calamities that will befall a messy house on New Year’s Day, as predicted by superstitious grandmothers. It is easier in East Asia, therefore, to associate New Year’s Day with a period of preparation. (If you call it Chinese New Year out of habit or convenience, remember to call it Lunar New Year in the presence of Japanese, Koreans or Vietnamese who celebrate their New Year’s Day on the same day with some similarities in customs but they are not Chinese.)

On the other hand, New Year’s Day in the Western world is often overshadowed by Christmas – there is a huge mess in the house from Christmas and nobody wants to clean up the house yet because it is still holiday season, and sometimes the stayover guests haven’t yet left.

Therefore, in East Asia you may start discussing Advent as a period of preparation when talking about starting a new year but this leaflet will push that discussion to Advent 3 and focus this Sunday on having a new year itself.

There is a lot to discuss when talking about a new year in the Church and not leaving much time to talk about the Gospel reading itself. If you do refer to the Gospel reading, you may want to be cautious when discussing the first paragraph in case there are children who may get traumatised with the idea of their parents suddenly disappearing and leaving them alone. I would focus on the second paragraph which is much more positive.

If you have any child who is Catholic from an Eastern Rite, their church may not have the same liturgical calendar as we do in the Western Rite even though they may be every bit as Catholic as we are. Get them to share about when their liturgical year starts if they know but more likely you will need to research it online before the session.

**Liturgy**

Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!

Let us see, O Lord, your mercy

and give us your saving help.

Alleluia!

Gospel

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And also with your spirit.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew

*All:*  Glory to you O Lord

(Mt 24:37-44)

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘As it was in Noah’s day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left.

‘So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.’

This is the Good News of the Lord

**Dialogue**

*Do you know that today is New Year’s Day?* Explain that today is the start of a new year in the Church. Explain that there are lots of new year’s days throughout the year. Discuss when the school year starts (O, we may have a problem here – a September start to the school year is only common in Europe and North America. Many countries in Equatorial regions (eg., Nigeria, Malaysia) or the Southern Hemisphere (eg., Australia, Brazil) start their school year in January/February and end it in December.

Discuss the different new year days observed by different ethno-cultural and religious communities because they use different calendars – Chinese/lunar, Muslims, etc. (Do you know there are 30 different new year days celebrated in India?).

Tax years start on different dates in different countries, not all on 1 January. The UK has a very interesting historical reason for starting their tax year on 6 April.

Explain that in the Western Catholic Church we start our year on first Sunday of Advent. It will be on a different date every year because any particular date will move on day down the week the next year. But the start of the liturgical year is always a Sunday. If you have older children, you may want to explain about the three-year cycle and which Gospel is used in each year.