***LSW***

children

BEING IN ADVENT

This is the period of preparation for the arrival of Jesus at Christmas.  The word *Advent* comes from the Latin for *coming.*  It means a period of prayer and penitence before we are allowed to celebrate the birth of Christ.  Advent is also the new year for the church calendar and the First Sunday in Advent is our New Year's Day.

Being a preparation season, the liturgical colour is purple, meaning the priest wears purple vestments at mass - only the stole (piece of cloth around his neck and down his chest), chasuble (the robe on the outside) or any other decor; the basic vestments underneath remain white.  The church may also be decorated with purple flowers, purple buntings and the like.  Purple is deemed the colour of penitence (It is also the colour of mourning - which is why the priest wears purple at funerals).

There is an exception, though: the colour for the third Sunday of Advent is pink (or rose).  That Sunday is called Gaudate Sunday (Latin for *Rejoice*): to give us a little break after we pass the mid-point of a penitential season.

It runs for the four Sundays before Christmas day and so the last day is always Christmas eve.  It can be as long as a full four weeks starting from Nov 27 (if Christmas Day is a Sunday) or as short as three weeks and one day starting from Dec 3 (if Christmas Day is a Monday).

The Advent Wreath, with its four candles fixed on a circle of evergreens, has its roots in pagan northern Europe, which the Lutherans first adopted as a Christian symbol.  The circle represents the never-ending cycle of seasons while the evergreens symbolise the persistence of life even during winter.  Christian symbolism differ slightly: the circle represents the the eternity of God while the evergreens tells of Jesus, who death could not conquer.  The four candles are lit one every Sunday, causing all candles to be of different heights by the end of the season.  There are three purple candles and a pink/rose one for the Third Sunday of Advent.  Sometimes, there is a fifth white candle in the middle to symbolise Christ, and is lit on Christmas Day or Christmas eve.

The Advent Calendar that we have today seems to be a combination of two separate customs.  The original advent calendar notes the goals for personal prayer and penitence for the different days in this period of penitence.  This calendar is now merged with the Jesse Tree, named after King David's father and unfortunately a dying custom.  Symbols of saints and Old Testament prophets & patriarchs are hung on the Jesse Tree, one on each day of Advent.

Year C

### First Sunday in Advent

**Images**

Jesus is coming

**Points to note**

For this reading, I have chosen the first reading of Jeremiah instead of the Gospel reading for two reasons. First, the Gospel reading for the First Sunday in Advent last year in Year B is a parallel to this one and is therefore very similar. Secondly, the reading this year from Luke is more difficult than the reading from Mark last year. As it is, this passage is considered rather difficult, but this year’s reading is even darker and even more troubling.

The reading from Jeremiah is simpler and return to a simpler theme that Jesus is from the house of King David, and how the children to prepare to greet the coming of the king. Also, don’t forget that as you will be taking some time out before the reading to explain about Advent and the start of the liturgical calendar, there may be rather less time for the discussions itself after the reading.

**Liturgy**

As the Gospel is not read, the Acclamation is not sung.

#### Reading

*Discuss with the children about the new season of the liturgical calendar that we are entering. This is available in the end panel of this leaflet & for a more complete explanation, at* [*http://childrenlivingthesundayword.blogspot.com/2013/09/soundbites-about-advent-christmas.html*](http://childrenlivingthesundayword.blogspot.com/2013/09/soundbites-about-advent-christmas.html)*.*

A Reading from the book of Jeremiah

(Jer 33:14-16)

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I am going to fulfil the promise I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

‘In those days and at that time,

I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David,

who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land.

In those days Judah shall be saved

and Israel shall dwell in confidence.

And this is the name the city will be called:

The-Lord-our-integrity.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Discussion**

*This discussion should be kept short as the bulk of the discussion takes place before the reading.*

###### Have anyone ever met a king or a prince? *It is unlikely they have but get them to imagine it. If they were to be invited to the birthday party of a young prince of their age, what would they do. Discuss the preparations. How would they dress up and what gifts would they bring. If they were to meet the parents of the birthday boy (the king and queen), what would they say – would they be practising what they say? And their table manners – would they be going through all their lessons on table manners again?*

###### In the reading, it refers to someone from the family of King David whom God will send to save his people. Who do you think that will be? *Explain that Jesus is a descendent of King David and is therefore a king himself. God sent him to save us and his birthday will be soon. Help the children to count the days.*

###### How would you prepare for this birthday party? *Do not confuse this birthday party with Christmas itself. We are not discussing about preparing for Christmas but preparing to greet Jesus. Focus on how they will put on their best for Jesus.*

###### *When you go to a party you put on clothes and behaviour that your host would like. For instance, a suit would be nice but not appropriate for a birthday party would it? So, what kind of clothes and behaviour that the children think Jesus would like to see the children put on? This would be clothes that are decent but not showy – Jesus doesn’t like people to show off their wealth. Behaviour should be polite but do not deferential – Jesus is a king who comes to serve but not to be served (see last week’s reading).*

###### *Most of all, Jesus wants us to do good to everyone – he likes honest people and he doesn’t like us to be nice in front of us but be nasty to our friends & family when he is not around.*

###### *Discuss how the children could do all these things between now and Christmas and whether they can keep this up after Christmas?*