

## The Gospel at Home

### This Sunday's Gospel: Mark 13:33–37

The Church's three-year cycle of Lectionary readings begins again on the First Sunday of Advent. We start reading from Cycle B, which is organized around Mark's Gospel. Throughout Advent, we also hear the prophet Isaiah's words in the First Reading. On this first Sunday of the Church year, Jesus speaks of his coming in glory. He cautions us always to be ready for him, to live each day in the light of God. **Note:** Friday is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a holyday of obligation.

### Exploring the Gospel Message

**Seeds (Preschool):** To very young children, the time before Christmas seems to drag on and on. Younger children respond well to simple waiting activities, such as Advent calendars or Advent chains that are done with some ceremony every day. Make sure that whatever you use with your young child is linked to the coming of the Christ Child, not just to Santa Claus.

**Promise (Grades K–1):** Advent reminds us of Israel's long wait for the coming of the Messiah—God's promised one. Talk with your child about the Advent calendar he or she received with this week's lesson. Post the calendar and see to it that your child completes one square each day. Make an Advent wreath for your home. Light a new candle each Sunday until all four are burning brightly. Make lighting the candles on the wreath a special meal prayer each day during Advent.

**Good News (Grades 2–3):** Your child learned about the prophet Isaiah and how his words teach us about the coming of Jesus. Your child has also prepared a little Advent booklet that is a reminder to always be ready for Jesus' arrival.

Part of the booklet is a family forgiveness service. Use the forgiveness service as a night prayer some evening during the week. As often as you wish, simply begin with the Sign of the Cross, ask for one another's forgiveness, and close with the Lord's Prayer.

**Venture (Grades 4–6):** This week, your child learned about Israel's Exile and the longing of the people to return home. Talk about your personal experiences of wanting to go home, to be with loved ones, or to find someone or something that was lost. Make some family plans for Advent. Your child can share with you the section of this week's lesson, "What Will Your Advent Be Like?" Ask your child to tell the family about Saint Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

**Visions (Grades 7–8):** In class this week, your teen learned about the history and the signs and symbols of Advent. Ask him or her to share what the class learned. The class also planned activities to do each day during Advent. As a family, plan a simple prayer or action for each day as well. It should be something that can be done easily but that helps focus your family on the coming feast and on serving others.

### Pray Together

Plan to have a family Advent wreath. The wreath should have four candles—three violet (purple) and one rose (pink) are traditional, but all white or red candles will do. During the first week of Advent, light one candle each evening, the second week light two, and the third week three. The third week is for the rose candle. Then for the last week, you will have all four candles lit. Say a prayer together that shows how you are eager for the coming of Jesus. It can be as simple as "Come, Lord Jesus, come."