



a Kendall Hunt Company

First Sunday of Advent, Year B, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7

Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word or image that engages you?

Read the following **Word in Liturgy** and **Catholic Doctrine** sections. Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need.

The Word In Liturgy

The scriptures of the Advent season focus on the coming of Christ in two ways; first, by continuing the eschatological themes of recent weeks, they anticipate the final coming of the Lord in glory at the end of time. Then, as Christmas draws nearer, the focus narrows to Christ's coming in history, in the mystery of the incarnation. The gospel for this First Sunday of Advent makes it clear that today's readings are meant to be heard in the context of Christian faith in the second coming.

The text from Isaiah is a psalm-like passage that captures the longing of the Jewish people after their return from the Exile. The prophet gives voice to the lament of the people, mindful of the guilt they carry for their sins, yet hopeful in the Lord's forgiveness. In calling God "our redeemer" (Hebrew: go'el) the author evokes the special intimacy which Israel enjoyed with Yahweh. A go'el was the relative bound to care for one of his own whom misfortune had overtaken, by providing an heir, paying off debts, ransoming those sold into slavery, or avenging wrongs. The text acknowledges the guilt and the brokenness of the people, their dependence on their go'el, and begs the Lord to come and rescue his people (return . . . come down . . . meet us"). Psalm 80, a song of communal lament, is a perfect complement to this text. It places emphasis both on the people's need for conversion ("make us turn to you") and on the urgency of the Lord's coming ("rouse your power"). Heard through the filter of the eschatological perspective of today's celebration, the psalm's request that God "give us new life" (v. 18) takes on ultimate significance.



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The Pauline reading from 1 Corinthians is filled with confidence that God has and will continue to rescue us in Christ as the final judgment approaches. Paul reassures his readers that God “will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.8). The Corinthians—as all Christians thereafter—are reminded that in Christ we have already been “enriched in every way” (v. 5) and that we lack for nothing as we “wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 7). The way in which a faithful Christian awaits the second coming is not fearfully and in dread, but, rather, with joyful anticipation and boundless confidence.

The gospel pericope is taken from the eschatological discourse in chapter 13 of Mark. The context there is somber and threatening, containing as it does themes of the destruction of Jerusalem and the final persecution of the just. However, today’s reading limits itself to teachings about the importance of an attitude of watchfulness and being ready when the Lord comes. Mark’s use of the parable of the man on a journey reflects early Christian concerns about the imminence of the Parousia and the need for vigilance in the face of its inevitability. Mark has Jesus direct this warning to everyone: “What I say to you I say to all: ‘Watch!’ ” (v. 37).

Catholic Doctrine

The Second Coming

The season of Advent leads up to and prepares believers for Christmas, when we will celebrate the birth of the Lord, his incarnation among us. But as the Church prepares to celebrate his birth, it also looks forward to his second coming at the end of time. The Latin *adventus* means, “arrival.” Christ has come. He dwelt among us. The earth-shaking arrival of the Christ signaled a great change. Everything now moves forward to a great culmination when Christ will come again. In other words, it is not possible to look back in faith at the first coming of Christ without looking forward to its resolution in judgment and the fullness of the kingdom of God.

Between the first coming and the second coming of Christ, there is our current history, and in-between time. Do we live suspended between first and second coming, without access to a current experience of the presence of Jesus? No. We believe that from his Ascension to the final resolution at the end of time, Jesus remains present to us in his Church, the Body of Christ, through the Holy Spirit (CCC 686). Memory, historical commemoration, and prayer recall the first coming and provide a basis for awaiting the second, final coming (CCC 1165). This waiting is not an occasion for passivity. Rather, we live our lives in the here and now a certain way, proclaiming the Good News of salvation, precisely because Jesus Christ is coming again.

When Christ come again he will arrive as judge of our works and our hearts. This is not at all contradictory to his role as savior who offers new life to everyone. The judgment that will

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occur will be the result of our own actions or non-actions. In other words, it will depend upon our acceptance of the gift of Christ's grace in this life (CCC 679). Urgency is the character of this in-between time as we await the second coming. All are called to conversion, to conform their lives to the Gospel proclaimed by the Church and to the works of justice on behalf of the kingdom of God (CCC 1041).

This season proclaims, therefore, that there is more to this world—and our times and our lives—than meets the eye. Only faith can reveal the deeper reality and promise of God that is found in Christ. As believers look forward to his second coming, every moment in the here and now is pregnant with possibility—for that end time may be upon us at any moment (CCC 673).

From the Ascension onward, every present moment is endowed with great potential. It is the potential of a total transformation by the gift of God. It is the potential of God's power moving among us. What salvation history prepared for us, what the incarnation of Christ revealed to us, is what the Church continually celebrates even now as we anticipate the fullness of the kingdom. When will Jesus come again? We do not know the hour or the day. But we know the promise will be fulfilled.

John Paul II writes: "In this eschatological perspective, believers should be called to a renewed appreciation of the theological virtue of hope, which they have already heard proclaimed 'in the word of truth, the Gospel.' The basic attitude of hope, on the one hand, encourages the Christian not to lose sight of the final goal which give meaning and value to life, and, on the other, offers solid and profound reasons for a daily commitment to transform reality in order to make it correspond to God's plan" (TMA 46).

Thus, as we anticipate the second coming we are filled with hope. For time itself is filled with an urgency, a potential, and the power of Christ to transform everything. We taste that potential in the Eucharist and in the Church. Indeed, at any moment Christ may arrive and bring the fullness of the kingdom. We pray with the early Christians, *marana tha*, "Our Lord, come!" (CCC 671).