

Don't Miss Your Chance

Scripture Background

This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background for the leader. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.

The Gospel reading on the first Sunday of Advent always focuses on the theme of being alert, awake, and watchful. It is a great week for Catholics to reflect on how we can keep our minds and hearts alert to how Jesus comes to us each day, not just on Christmas. The temptation is to fall into the trap of spending this month in a flurry of over-spending, overeating, and abusing alcohol, all activities which limit our ability to “stay awake” to what is most important in our lives.

Opening Prayer

Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good and Gracious God, open our minds and hearts today to hear your message in Scripture.

May your Holy Spirit inspire us so that we go out from here encouraged, consoled, and strengthened by your Word.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gospel Reading: Mark 13:33-37

Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.

Ask: What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.

Reflections on the Reading

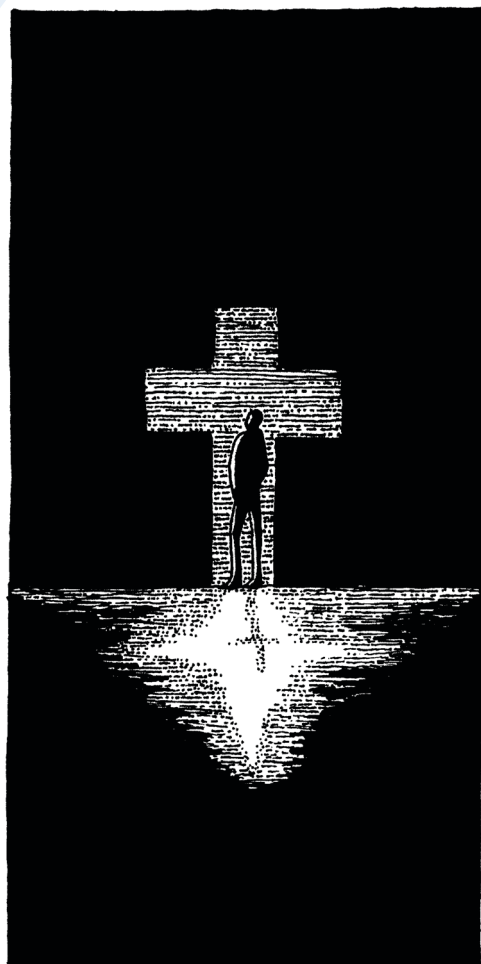
Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

As Advent begins, we hear Jesus warn his listeners—and us—to be alert and watchful. What are we to be watching and waiting for? In the Gospels, Jesus was referring to his Second Coming

November 29, 2026 • Year B

1st Sunday of Advent

- ▶ Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7 • Prayer for the return of God's favor
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 • Thanksgiving
- ▶ Mark 13:33-37 • Need for watchfulness



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and the end of the world as we know it. In fact, the apostles and his early friends and followers were so certain that Jesus was returning soon that they believed it would happen in their lifetimes.

Now, 2,000 years later, we sometimes take for granted that the world probably isn't about to end anytime soon, despite the COVID pandemic, natural disasters, and endless war. Yet maybe Jesus is still calling us to be alert to all of the opportunities we have to love and be loved right now, today, because we don't know how much time we have left on this earth.

It is common to hear victims of natural disasters or tragic violence say, "I never imagined this would happen to us. I never imagined this would happen here." Maybe part of what they are saying is that they were sleepwalking through life, taking their lives and the lives of their loved ones for granted.

If we knew we only had a short time left to live, how would we want to spend our remaining time? What if we knew our child or spouse or parent would be taken from us soon? How might our priorities change? Even if we aren't motivated to stay watchful for the end of this world, Jesus is still calling us to be alert so that we don't miss the opportunities to love and serve the people of this world while we have the chance. What is passing us by because we are too busy and distracted to notice?

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

- ① Every few years a small Christian group predicts that the end of the world is in sight. We might not pay much attention to them, but how would you live life differently if you only had a few weeks or days to live? What would you change? What concrete actions would you take?
- ② In what particular area(s) of your life do you take things for granted? How could you change?
- ③ What might you like to be more alert to this upcoming week? What might Jesus be inviting you to notice, savor, and cherish more?

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Gracious God, in this time of preparation for Jesus' birth,

May we make more room in our hearts and our lives to welcome you, in whatever form you come to us.

Amen.

A Long Road Ahead

Scripture Background

This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background for the leader. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.

During Advent, the Sunday Old Testament readings are from the book of Isaiah. Just as Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and through the desert to the promised land, Isaiah is telling the people to prepare for another journey through the desert, this time back to their homeland. The verse "A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord" will be picked up in today's Gospel reading referring to John the Baptist. For Christians, it was John who paved the way for Jesus to begin his teaching and healing ministry.

Opening Prayer

Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Good and Gracious God, open our minds and hearts today to hear your message in Scripture.

May your Holy Spirit inspire us so that we go out from here encouraged, consoled, and strengthened by your Word.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:1-8

Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.

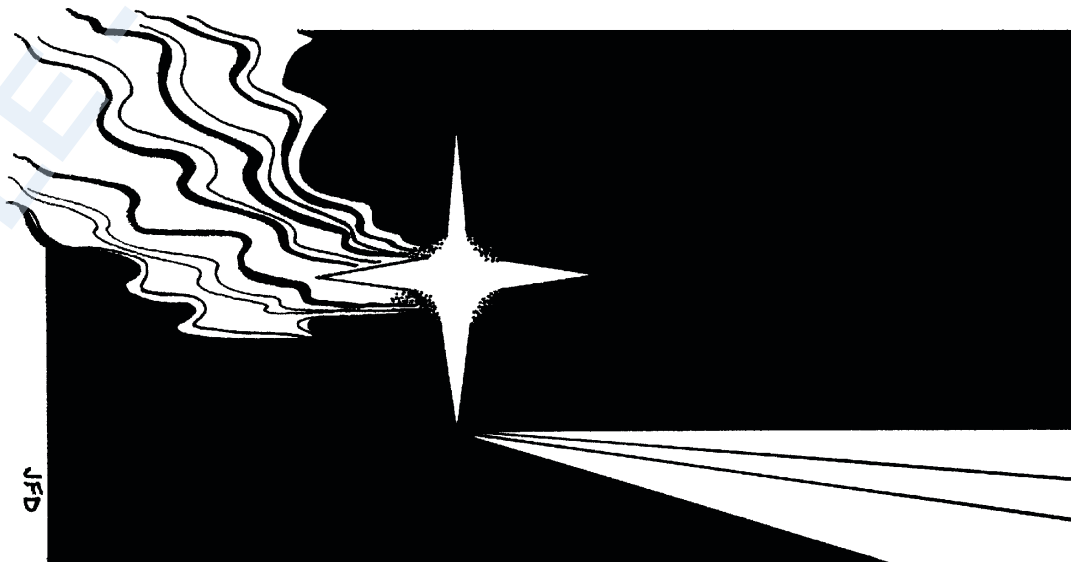
Ask: What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.

December 6, 2026 • Year B

2nd Sunday of Advent

- ▶ Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11 • Promise of salvation
- ▶ 2 Peter 3:8-14 • Christ will come in judgment
- ▶ Mark 1:1-8 • John the Baptist



Reflections on the Reading

Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

In the First Reading, the prophet Isaiah addressed the Jewish people, who were captives in Babylon. It was a time of great darkness in the history of our Jewish ancestors. Their country had been conquered and their people were captured and taken away to a foreign land. Isaiah was speaking to people who knew what hopelessness felt like, people who understood personal and national darkness and despair. They didn't know if their nation would survive the conquest or if they would ever see their homeland again. Home was 500 miles across the wilderness as the crow flies, but a 900 mile trek because of the terrain.

Isaiah proclaimed words of comfort, and promised that their ordeal was about to end. He knew the journey back home would be long and hard. The people would have mountains to climb and valleys to cross as they passed through the rugged landscape, but Isaiah promised that God would be with them to smooth the way. He assured them that their God was coming with power and like a shepherd would feed his flock and lead them with care.

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

- ① Of all the disturbing situations in this year of 2020, which one(s) most disturb you and make you long for God's relief or comfort?
- ② In what personal situation(s) are you experiencing mountains, valleys, and rough country?
- ③ How have you experienced God, or God's messengers, smoothing your way during a difficult time? How could you help to smooth the rough road of someone else you know this week?

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Gracious God, in this time of preparation for Jesus' birth,

May we make more room in our hearts and our lives to welcome you, in whatever form you come to us.

Amen.