



# Bible Study

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent Year A

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Parishes

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“And do this because you know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light...” Romans 13:11-12 NABRE

### Reading I: Isaiah 2:1-5

**Walk In the Light – Put on the Armor of Light!** The Season of Advent gives us a chance to relive the ancient expectancy of the Messiah. It is by sharing this time of expectancy of the Messiah’s first coming that we prepare ourselves for His second coming. This year, the theme for the four Sundays in Advent is, “*Walk in the Light.*” The light, of course, is Jesus. The theme is to help us prepare to receive Christ through prayer, sacrifice and acts of generosity.

The theme comes from Isaiah 2:5; “*O House of Jacob, come, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*” In this context, the “light of the Lord” refers to God’s moral standards by which He seeks to guide His people. It could be paraphrased as, “*let’s obey the Lord’s commands.*”

### LIGHT

Light is defined generally as illumination. It is the opposite of darkness. The Bible also speaks of light as the symbol of God’s presence and righteous activity.

Light has been associated with the presence, truth, and redemptive activity of God since creation. Before man was created, light was brought into being by the Creator: “Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good” (Gen 1:3-4). Throughout the Bible, light represents truth, goodness, and God’s redemptive work. Darkness, on the other hand, symbolizes error, evil, and the works of Satan (Gen 1:4).

Several of the miracles recorded in the Bible are related to light and darkness: the “Pillar of Fire” that guided the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex 3:21), the sun standing still at Gibeon at Joshua’s request (Josh 10:12-13), and the fall of darkness at midday when Jesus was being crucified (Matt 27:45). (From Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers).



Let us walk in the  
light of the Lord!

Isaiah preached in Jerusalem during a critical time for the Chosen People from 742 B.C. to 700 B.C., when they were under the thumb of Assyria and Judah relied on political alliances, rather than on Yahweh. Isaiah preached condemnation for such conduct. His condemnation was ignored and Judah was carried off into slavery by Babylon.

Chapters 1-5 of Isaiah contrast what God intended Israel to be (2:1-5) with what Israel was in fact, (2:6—4:1) and what God would make of her in the future (4:2-6). These readings from Isaiah make it clear that God wanted Israel to be the “*light to the world.*” The mountain of the House of the Lord is identified as the highest mountain where all could see it and “stream toward it. (v. 2) Nations would come to Israel for instruction on moral standards. Isaiah’s vision of the Messianic Age is this. Using His teachings as the standard, the Lord would judge disputes between nations from Jerusalem. Isaiah begs the Chosen People to walk in the light, that is, keep God’s Commandments. DISCUSSION QUESTION: How will you keep God’s commandment of fidelity during Advent.

### Reading II: Romans 13:11-14

**Walk In the Light – Put on the Armor of Light!** St. Paul is very direct in these verses. He reminds the Roman Christians and us as well, to *walk in the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* This Letter of St Paul to the Romans is his longest of his writings. It was written around 58 A.D. It was probably written in preparation for his visit. He did not visit Rome as a free person, but rather as a prisoner of Rome. As a prisoner, he did much to help spread the Gospel in the capital of the Roman Empire. See (Rom. 15:22-29); (Phil. 1:12-14).

In this reading, St. Paul reminds us that our lives are in transition. We must be ready, awake and free from dark behaviors that celebrate human weaknesses. He challenges us to discard our weaknesses to sensual pleasure and put on the Armor of Light, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: What did St. Paul mean by, “Armor of God?” What provisions do you make for the flesh during the Christmas Season?

### Gospel: Matthew 24:37-44

**Walk In the Light – Put on the Armor of Light!** Sometimes the weight of the world and our normal activities lessen our perception of God's presence among us. The shopping frenzy stimulated by "Black Friday Deals" serves to distract us from our preparation for the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ. We are also concerned with making a living i.e. "provisions for the flesh," and often neglect our obligation to love one another. But as the Gospel tells us, we do not know the day or the hour when we will be called to account for our fidelity to the Commandments of God. We should make special provisions to receive Jesus this Christmas in the same way we prepare for His Second Coming.

This Advent Season, we should make a special effort to put on the Armor of Light as we wait for Christ at Christmas. The Armor of Light here is defined as, obedience to the Gospel, prayer, self denial, works of charity and reception of the sacraments. By enveloping ourselves with these confirmations of God's presence in us, we can welcome Jesus this Christmas with a pure, sincere and grateful heart.

In the Gospel, Jesus is speaking of His second coming and emphasizes the sudden and unexpected nature of the event. The comparison to the flood of Noah is used to dramatize the event. The judgment will come as a surprise, as people live their day to day lives (vv. 37-42). The point here is that we ought to imitate Noah's preparation as we prepare for the coming of Christ. (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20-21) Noah and his family did not sit idle waiting for the rains to start. They build an ark and gathered provisions. This form of preparation is not to be confused with people going about their daily lives because one will be taken and one will be left (vv. 40-41).

Jesus wants His disciples and us to prepare by doing good works and keeping His Commandments. The second coming of Christ will be totally unexpected, like a thief in the night (v. 36). Here, Jesus warns of complacency as the sleepy master allowed his possessions to be taken (vv. 43-44). Preparation for the Lord's return then, requires spiritual alertness and vigilance. It requires receiving the sacraments, constant prayer and performing acts of service for others. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How does receiving the sacraments, prayer and works of charity and mercy help you prepare for the second coming of Christ?

### Pray About It!

#### Monday

Read Matt 25:10. Offer a prayer for procrastinators.

#### Tuesday

Read Matt 25:13. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

#### Wednesday

Read James 5:9. Make a special effort not to complain about anything.

#### Thursday

Read Luke 12:40. Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

#### Friday

Spend ten minutes in silent prayer. Ask God to make you more aware of His presence during this Advent Season.

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ADVENT

The Catholic Church has designated the four weeks proceeding Christmas as Advent. This is a time to "prepare the way of the Lord" for His coming as our Lord and Savior. Specifically, the Church teaches that: *[w]hen the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating [John the Baptist's] birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Catechism, of the Catholic Church, No. 524; original emphasis).*

**Resources:** *The Gospel of Matthew*, Curtis Mitch, Edward Sri, Baker Academic Grand Rapids, Mi., p. 313-315; *The Sunday Readings Cycle C* Kevin O'Sullivan, O. F. M. Franciscan Press, Quincy University, Quincy, Ill. pp. 1-6; *Romans*, John J. Pilch, Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 1081-1089; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year C* 2014, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 2-5

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2013