FIRST SUNDAY/ADVENT
Year A

Adapted from Matthew 24:42-44

Jesus said to his disciples. "Stay awake! Keep watch! You do not know the day when your Lord will come. But you can be sure of this: If the owners of a house knew at what time a thief would be coming they would stay awake and keep watch. They would not allow the thief to break into their house.

"So you, too, must be prepared. The Lord will come at a time you do not expect."

OUR FAMILY REFLECTIONS

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

We Listen

What do you think Jesus meant when he told his friends, "Be ready?" What might the friends have done?

We Reflect

How would you get ready for a special guest to come to you? What feelings would you have as you wait for your guest?

We Respond

What would you like to do to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' coming? What might please Jesus most?

OUR FAMILY RITUAL

Make an Advent wreath of green branches or other natural materials. Add holders for three purple or midnight blue candles and one pink candle. Place wreath on a table or hang it from the ceiling with ribbons. Light one candle the first week of Advent.

LET US PRAY

All extend hands over the Advent wreath.

Leader: Creator God, bless this wreath made of the gifts of nature that you have provided. May the candles recall for us the light of your presence even in the darkest night. May the circle of the wreath be a sign of your never-ending love for us. We ask this blessing in the name of your son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

One family member lights first candle.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.
Come and fill our hearts.

Leader: Lead us with your light, Lord.
Warm us with your love.

All: Come, Lord Jesus , come.
Come and fill our hearts.

Leader: Encircle us forever, Lord.
And bless us all this night.

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come.
Come and fill our hearts.

During first week, light one candle.

SECOND SUNDAY/ADVENT
Year A

Adapted from Matthew 3:1-6,11

At that time John the Baptist went out to the desert of Judea, and spoke out to the people who followed him, "Change your lives! The reign of God is near!"

He spoke like the one of whom Isaiah the prophet said: "There will be a voice of one calling in the desert. 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him!'"

John's clothes were made of camel's hair and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People from the city and that whole area went out to the desert to see him. They confessed their sins,and John baptized them in the Jordan River.

John told them: "I baptize you with water so you may change your lives. But after me someone who is more powerful than I am will come. I am not worthy even to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

OUR FAMILY REFLECTIONS

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

We Listen

Imagine you and your family were in the crowd that went out to the desert to see John the Baptist. What do you hear John say?

We Reflect

What do John's words say to you about Jesus? What do John's words say to you about yourself?

We Respond

How will you make your heart ready for Jesus? What will you change?

OUR FAMILY RITUAL

Gather around your Advent wreath. One person lights the first and second purple or midnight blue candles.

LET US PRAY

Leader (speaking slowly): The story of John the Baptist leads us to the quiet and peaceful desert. Close your eyes and pretend you are sitting on the rocky hillside near the river. Now look quietly into yourself and see where you may need to change. Let us take a moment to be silent. (*Pause.*)

Leader: The story leads us next to the refreshing waters of the Jordan River. You are invited to go into the cool water. As the water washes over you, allow it to take away whatever has been keeping you from Jesus. (*Pause.*)

Leader: Let us pray. May each of us always answer the invitation to change our hearts, we pray.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: May all followers of Jesus answer the call to repentance, we pray.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: And may God bless us with joy this Advent season.

All: Amen.

During the week, the first and second Advent candles may be lighted.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
December 8

Adapted from: Luke 1:26-38

God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth, to a maiden engaged to a man named Joseph. The maiden's name was Mary. The angel said to her, "Rejoice, O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women."

Mary was deeply troubled; she wondered what he meant. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You will have a son, whom you will name Jesus."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am not married?"

The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you. Your holy child will be called the Son of God. Your cousin, Elizabeth, is also going to have a baby, although she may seem too old. For nothing is impossible with God."

And Mary answered, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me as you have said."

OUR FAMILY REFLECTIONS

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

We Listen

How do you think Mary felt when the angel told her that her baby would be the Son of God? What might she have said to her parents?

We Reflect

Think of a time when you made a difficult choice. What was that like for you?

We Respond

Mary placed her trust in God. How can the example of Mary help you when you have a difficult choice in the future?

OUR FAMILY RITUAL

Display a statue or picture of Mary on your prayer table. If you have rosary beads in your family, you may wish to use them for your prayer time together on this feast day.

The custom of praying with beads is very ancient. Since the time of St. Dominic, about 700 years ago, Christians have honored Mary by praying the rosary. We can honor Mary on this feastday by praying one decade or more of the rosary.

LET US PRAY

The leader prays the first part of each prayer; everyone prays the last part together. The prayers may be found in the back of this book.

Counting on the beads of the rosary, pray the following prayers:

One "Our Father" (while holding the large bead that separates the ten beads).

Ten "Hail Marys" (one for each of the ten small beads).

One "Glory Be" (after the tenth bead).

You might begin each decade by reflecting on a different event in the life of Jesus and Mary.

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
December 12

Adapted from Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

After the wise men had left Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you. Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him."

Joseph got up and with the child Jesus and Mary, his mother, traveled to Egypt by night. They stayed there until Herod died.

Then the angel of the Lord appeared once more to Joseph in a dream.

"Get up," the angel said. "Take the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead."

They returned to the land of Israel and made their home in Galilee, in a town called Nazareth.

OUR FAMILY REFLECTIONS

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

We Listen

How would you describe Joseph's feelings when the angel told him to take his family to a safe country?

We Reflect

What is it like for you to know God protects you even though what God might ask of you is difficult?

We Respond

What are some ways in which you can show your trust in God's care for you, especially in difficult times?

OUR FAMILY RITUAL

Draw pictures or describe on this page a time when your family was troubled and felt protected by God. Place your pictures on your prayer table. Light a single candle.

LET US PRAY

Leader: Mary the mother of Jesus appeared to Juan Diego in Mexico in the year 1531. The people of Mexico honor her as *Our Lady of Guadalupe*. Let us pray for the intercession of Mary.

For all who must travel far as Mary, Joseph, and Jesus did, we pray:

All: Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

Leader: For refugees and families without homes, we pray:

All: Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

Leader: For children who are fearful and for the adults who comfort them, we pray:

All: Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

Leader: Loving God, we ask to become more aware of your loving presence with us always. Help us to trust as Mary, Joseph, and Jesus did.

All: Amen.

Conclude your prayer with the Hail Mary.

THIRD SUNDAY/ADVENT
Year A

Adapted from Matthew 11:2-6

When John the Baptist was in prison, he heard about the things Jesus was doing. So he sent his followers to ask him: "Are you the Messiah we have been waiting for, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus said to them, "Go back and tell John what you hear and see: People who were blind can see, people who were lame can walk, people who had leprosy are healed, people who were dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor."

Then Jesus asked: "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed blown by the wind? No? A man dressed in fine clothes? No? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. John was the one about whom the Scriptures say: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'"

OUR FAMILY REFLECTIONS

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

We Listen

If you were one of John's messengers, how would you have felt about what Jesus told you to tell John?

We Reflect

In what ways are the words of Jesus still coming true today? Who are helping the blind to see, the lame to walk, the sick to be healed and so forth?

We Respond

What would the world be like if the healing love of Jesus touched everyone? In what way might you bring healing to another?

OUR FAMILY RITUAL

Place on your prayer table pictures of persons in need.

LET US PRAY

One person lights three candles on the Advent wreath, two purple or midnight blue and one pink. This Sunday is *Gaudete* or Rejoice Sunday. The Church rejoices because the day of Christ's birth is near.

Leader: As we gather around the Advent wreath, we remember the One whose birth we are preparing to celebrate. It is Jesus, our Savior, whom John the Baptist announced. It is Jesus, our companion and friend, who is with us even now.

Let us remember all those in need of Jesus' healing touch.

All who wish, mention names of people in need.

Leader: Let us bring to prayer our own need for the healing love of Jesus.

All who wish, mention a need of their own.

Leader: Jesus, our friend and companion, we ask that you give us the grace to bring your comfort and healing to all we meet. Heal us, too, of all that keeps us from loving one another.

All: Amen.

Conclude with a hug for each person.

FOURTH SUNDAY/ADVENT
Year A

Adapted from Matthew 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: Mary, his mother, was engaged to a man named Joseph. Before they lived together, she found that she was going to have a child by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph was a good man, and he decided to break their engagement quietly. But an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream and said, "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived. Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All of this happened so that what God said through the prophet Isaiah would be made clear: "A virgin will give birth to a child, and she will name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us.'"

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of God told him. He took Mary into his home as his wife.

OUR FAMILY REFLECTIONS

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT

We Listen

What words would you use to describe Joseph?

What feelings might Joseph have had when the angel told him of the coming birth of Jesus?

We Reflect

Recall a time when you felt "God with us" — the presence of Jesus in your life. What is it like for you to feel God with you?

We Respond

How can you share God's presence in you with others?

OUR FAMILY RITUAL

One person lights all four candles on the Advent wreath. This week you may wish to place an empty manger or a large unlighted cradle in a place of honor in your home.

LET US PRAY

Leader: We are filled with joy as we look forward to the feast of the birth of Jesus, our Savior. This same thrill of anticipation filled the hearts of Mary and Joseph and their families as they awaited Jesus' birth. Zechariah put his joy into a prayer that we too now pray:

All repeat each line after the leader:

- Blessed are you, O God of Israel.
- You have visited and saved your people.
- You have given us a mighty Savior,
- From the family of David your servant.
- God's loving kindness will shine on us,
- Like the rising sun in the heavens,
- To give light to those who live in darkness,
- And to guide our feet into the way of peace.
- Amen.

Adapted from The Canticle of Zechariah, Luke 1:68-79