

LITURGY & LIFE

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY

First Sunday of Advent

Cycle B

A Catholic Update Companion to the Sunday Readings

STAY AWAKE—THE LORD IS NEAR

Long for the Lord • Receive grace • Keep watch • Make room for Christ

1: FOR THE HOMILIST/PCL OR OCIA CO-ORD.: CHRIST SPEAKS - WE LISTEN

Sunday Readings

Liturgical Color	Violet — Advent
First Reading	Isaiah 63:16b–17, 19b; 64:2–7
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 80:2–3, 15–16, 18–19
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 1:3–9
Gospel	Mark 13:33–37

The Heart of This Sunday's Gospel

THE MASTER MAY COME AT ANY TIME

Jesus tells his disciples to be watchful because the master of the house may return at an unexpected hour. Advent begins not with a sentimental scene but with an urgent summons: stay awake. Christian vigilance is not anxious prediction. It is a life ordered toward the Lord who has come, who comes now in grace, and who will come again in glory. The servants do not know the hour, but each has received a work to perform. The disciple prepares for Christ by remaining faithful to the responsibility, relationship, prayer, and act of love already entrusted today.

The Liturgical Thread

Isaiah speaks for a people who know God as Father and Redeemer yet feel distant from him. Their prayer is bold: “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.” Psalm 80 repeats the longing: “Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.” Paul assures the Corinthians that God has already enriched them with every grace and will keep them firm until the end. Jesus then gives the Advent command: stay awake and remain faithful to the work entrusted to you.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE READINGS

The people long for God to come → Grace sustains the waiting Church → Christ entrusts each servant with a work → The disciple stays awake in faithful hope

Listening With the Heart

Listen

Read Mark 13:33–37 slowly. Notice the repeated commands: “Be watchful,” “Be alert,” and “Watch.” Imagine the house, the absent master, the servants with assigned work, and the gatekeeper keeping vigil.

Reflect

Where has waiting made me tired, impatient, or careless? What work has Christ entrusted to me in this season? Which habit makes me spiritually drowsy? Where might the Lord be drawing near in an ordinary person or responsibility?

Pray

Pray Isaiah's longing honestly: "Lord, rend the heavens and come down." Ask for an awakened heart, courage to repent, fidelity in daily responsibilities, and compassion for those whose waiting is painful.

Rest

Rest in Saint Paul's promise that God is faithful and will keep you firm. You do not keep watch by your strength alone. Receive the grace already given and allow Christ's nearness to quiet anxiety and renew hope.

Carry This Word

MARK 13:37

'What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'

2: FOR THE CATECHIST: THE CHURCH TEACHES - WE LEARN

Catechetical Focus

ADVENT HOPE AND CHRISTIAN VIGILANCE

Advent trains the Church to live between promise and fulfillment. Israel cries for God to rend the heavens and come down. Saint Paul assures the Corinthians that grace will keep them firm as they await the revelation of Jesus Christ. In the Gospel, Christ commands every disciple to watch. This vigilance includes prayer, repentance, attentive worship, works of mercy, and fidelity to one's vocation. Advent is not passive waiting or seasonal nostalgia. It is hopeful readiness: remembering Christ's first coming, welcoming his present action, and preparing for his return. The liturgical season teaches the whole Church to recognize that the Lord is near and that every ordinary day can become a place of encounter.

Catholic Update Resources

PRIMARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C1711A | The Light of Advent: A Season of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy

This Update provides the broad spiritual framework for the season. Advent's familiar themes are not decorations added to December; they are graces that form a vigilant people. Hope refuses despair, peace makes room for reconciliation, love becomes concrete service, and joy arises from the nearness of Christ. The resource helps participants enter Advent as a season of conversion and expectation rather than merely preparation for a holiday.

SECONDARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C9111A | Celebrating Advent in Your Home

This Update carries the Sunday Word into household practice. Simple rituals—an Advent wreath, Scripture, prayer at meals, works of mercy, and intentional restraint—can help a home keep watch for Christ. These practices do not replace the parish liturgy; they extend it into daily life and help households resist the rush, consumption, and distraction that can obscure the season's spiritual purpose.

The Catechist's Companion

Key Teaching

The light of Advent forms the heart in hope. Household prayer gives that hope a daily place to burn.

Session Aim

Help participants understand Advent as active, hope-filled vigilance: remembering Christ's first coming, receiving him in the present, and preparing for his return through prayer, conversion, mercy, and faithful daily responsibility.

Formation Objectives

- Explain the threefold coming of Christ remembered during Advent: in history, in present grace, and in future glory.
- Describe Christian vigilance as faithful readiness rather than fear or speculation.
- Connect Isaiah's longing and Psalm 80 with the honest prayer of people who wait in difficulty.
- Identify household and parish practices that protect Advent from distraction and consumerism.
- Choose one concrete practice of prayer, reconciliation, restraint, or mercy for the coming week.

Integrating This Week's Catholic Updates

C1711A gives the season's spiritual vocabulary: hope, peace, love, and joy are habits of a people who expect Christ. C9111A gives those habits a domestic form through prayer, Scripture, symbols, and service in the home. Together they move Advent from an idea on the parish calendar into a way of watching, waiting, and welcoming Christ each day.

Expand the Conversation

- Why does Advent begin with Jesus' warning to stay awake rather than with the infancy narratives?
- How can lament and hope exist together in Isaiah's prayer?
- What is the difference between Christian vigilance and anxiety about the future?
- Which household practices help people recognize the spiritual meaning of Advent?

Common Misunderstandings

- Advent is not only preparation for Christmas. It also directs the Church toward Christ's present action and his return in glory.
- Staying awake does not mean avoiding sleep or living in fear. It means remaining spiritually attentive and faithful.
- Hope is not optimism that everything will quickly improve. It is confidence in the faithfulness of God even during painful waiting.
- Advent practices do not earn grace. They create space to receive and cooperate with the grace God freely gives.
- A household need not imitate every tradition. A few simple, sustainable practices are more formative than an exhausting program.

Church References

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 522–524; 668–682; 1817–1821; 2612; 2849. Scripture connections: Isaiah 40:1–11; Micah 5:1–4; Matthew 24:42–44; Luke 12:35–40; Romans 13:11–14; Philippians 4:4–7; 2 Peter 3:8–14; Revelation 22:12–20. Liturgical connections: Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, 39; Sacrosanctum Concilium, 102–110.

OCIA Connection

The beginning of Advent offers OCIA participants a living introduction to the liturgical year. The Church does not merely recall past events; she enters the mystery of Christ through seasons that form desire, memory, worship, and mission. Catechumens and candidates can be invited to experience Advent longing, participate

in parish prayer, establish a simple home practice, and consider where conversion is needed as they prepare for fuller communion with Christ and his Church.

Catechist's Insight

PASTORAL CARE

Advent can intensify grief, loneliness, financial pressure, family conflict, or disappointment. Do not present vigilance as constant emotional enthusiasm or imply that faithful people must feel cheerful. Isaiah gives the Church permission to lament and long for God. Make room for those whose waiting is painful, including people awaiting healing, reconciliation, employment, immigration decisions, conception, recovery, or the return of a loved one. Encourage realistic practices rather than an overloaded devotional program. The purpose is not to perform a perfect Advent but to become more available to Christ.

Begin with the Gospel's urgency but keep the tone hopeful. The master entrusts work because the servants belong to the household and have a real share in its life. Ask participants what has been entrusted to them rather than focusing only on what they have failed to do. Honor grief and complicated family circumstances. Encourage one or two concrete Advent commitments that can actually be sustained.

3: FOR THE CANDIDATE/CATECHUMEN: THE DISCIPLE RESPONDS - WE LIVE

Living the Gospel This Week

- Where has spiritual drowsiness entered my prayer, worship, relationships, or responsibilities?
- What am I waiting for, and how is that waiting shaping my relationship with God?
- Which Advent practice would help me become more attentive rather than merely busier?
- Is there a reconciliation, apology, or act of mercy I should not postpone?
- What work has Christ entrusted to me in my household, parish, or community?
- Who needs a word or action of hope from me this week?

Choosing to Be an Intentional Disciple

WHAT IS CHRIST ASKING OF ME TODAY?

What distraction, delay, or neglected responsibility is keeping me from recognizing the Lord who is near?

Intentional discipleship receives Advent as a call to reorder attention. The disciple protects time for prayer, participates faithfully in the Eucharist, seeks reconciliation, resists unnecessary consumption, notices the vulnerable, and completes the work entrusted by Christ. Watchfulness becomes visible in ordinary fidelity: answering the call, keeping the promise, welcoming the stranger, and beginning again when the heart grows drowsy.

Holy Habit

THE ADVENT WATCHFULNESS EXAMEN

At day's end ask: Where did I notice Christ today? Where did I live hurried, distracted, or spiritually asleep? What work was entrusted to me? Did I bring hope, peace, love, or joy into another person's life? What needs repentance or reconciliation before tomorrow? Conclude: 'Come, Lord Jesus. Keep my heart awake and make me faithful in the work You have given me.'

Faith Into Practice

- Light the first candle of an Advent wreath and pray briefly each day.
- Read the coming Sunday Gospel before the weekend liturgy.
- Choose one unnecessary purchase or distraction to set aside.
- Make one reconciliation or apology that should not be delayed.
- Offer a concrete act of hope to someone discouraged or alone.
- Protect ten minutes of silence each day and pray, "Come, Lord Jesus."
- Complete one neglected responsibility as an act of watchful faithfulness.

Personal Reflection

If Christ is already drawing near, what must change in the way I use my time, attention, possessions, and relationships?

4: FOR THE SPONSOR: THE CHURCH SENDS - WE WITNESS

Sponsor's Path of Accompaniment

Share Your Faith	Describe a season of waiting that deepened your trust in God. What helped you remain faithful when the outcome was uncertain?
Walk Together	Ask: "What are you waiting or hoping for right now?" Listen for longing, fear, and signs of grace without trying to solve everything.
Pray Together	Read Isaiah 64:1–7 and Mark 13:33–37. Pray for an awakened heart, patient hope, and fidelity to the work entrusted by Christ.
Experience the Church	Attend an Advent wreath blessing, parish prayer service, Eucharistic adoration, Reconciliation, or a ministry serving those who wait in hardship.
Continue the Journey	Each person chooses one simple Advent practice and one concrete act of hope or reconciliation to complete before the next conversation.

Faith at Home

Create a simple Advent prayer place with a wreath or candle, Bible, and empty manger or small cloth. At one meal each week, read the Sunday Gospel and ask: "Where did we notice Christ drawing near?" Choose one household act of mercy and keep the practice simple enough to sustain.

Parish Life

Mark the beginning of the liturgical year visibly. Bless the Advent wreath, provide the Sunday readings and simple home-prayer resources, publicize Reconciliation, and invite parishioners into one shared work of mercy. Ensure that parish Advent activities preserve silence, prayer, and welcome for those who are grieving or alone.

Go Forth This Week

Stay awake in hope, complete the work entrusted to you, and make room for the Lord who is already near.

Prayer for the Week

Lord Jesus Christ, You came among us in humility, You come to us now in Word, Sacrament, neighbor, and grace, and You will come again in glory. Awaken my heart at the beginning of this Advent. Free me from distraction, fear, and the illusion that there will always be more time. Teach me to wait with hope, to repent without delay, to pray with attention, and to serve faithfully in the work You have entrusted to me. Console those whose waiting is painful. Bring peace to divided homes, courage to the

discouraged, and light to those who walk in darkness. May my life become a watchful welcome for Your presence. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Emmaus Insight

Advent vigilance is not watching the clock; it is allowing every day to become a faithful welcome for Christ.