

St. Aloysius Religious Education

1st week of Advent

I can't help but think of the musical "Godspell" and the song ... "Prepare Ye the Way of The Lord" ... <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSIs1MHdFQY> ... when thinking of Advent. *John the Baptist wants us to get ready for the light of Christ to dispel the darkness!* The Gospel from the 1st Sunday of Advent (Mark 13:33-37) reminds us be prepared because we don't know when the Lord is coming.

Advent is the season of our preparation for Christ's coming: past, present and future. In joyful expectation, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas, his presence in our lives today, and his final coming at the end of time. The four weeks prepare us to rejoice in the Incarnation. At Christmas the Church celebrates with joy the wondrous exchange by which "Man's Creator has become man." Next to the Paschal Mystery, the Church holds most sacred the memorial of Christ's birth and early manifestations. This is the purpose of the Christmas season!

St. Aloysius parish distributed the following booklet ("*Five Minutes with the Word – Advent*"), which you might find useful at the prayer table with your class.

The Advent Wreath:

The Advent Wreath is very symbolic. The evergreens used for the wreath itself are a reminder of continuous life. The shaping of them into a circle reinforces that meaning. The circle is also a sign of everlasting life as well as the eternity of God.

The four candles, *three purple and one pink*, mark the Sundays of Advent before Christmas. The purple candles are reminders that this should be a time of prayer and sacrifice to prepare us for the coming of Christ. On the third Sunday, the pink candle is lit to announce *Gaudete* Sunday; a Sunday of rejoicing for Christ is coming near. With the lighting of that candle, the light has won out over the darkness (three candles lit vs. the one that remains unlit). Contrary to the dimming light of day (*as we enter the winter season*) the light of the Advent wreath grows brighter as Christ draws near!

The candles are traditionally lit in the following order: purple, purple, pink, purple. The first is called the "*Candle of Hope.*" It symbolizes faith in God keeping his promises to humanity. The second is called the "*Candle of Preparation,*" reminding Christians to "get ready" to receive God. The third candle is the "*Candle of Joy.*" It recalls the angels joyfully singing that the birth of Christ is near. The fourth candle, the "*Candle of Love,*" reminds Christians that God loves them enough to send his only Son to Earth. The "Christ Candle," a white candle in the center is a sign of purity, stands for Jesus Christ himself, the sinless savior.

The Liturgical vestments at Mass match the colors of the candles.

Catechist background:

<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=3994>

<http://www.aquinasandmore.com/catholic-articles/the-history-and-meaning-of-advent/article/173>

