

“Watching Guide”

A weekly guide to preparing for the birthday of Christ by preparing for his return.

A weekly publication during Advent

November 27-December 3, 2011

Monday November 28

Read: Isaiah 2: 1-5



Reflect:

How can you beat “swords into plowshares” in your life, as a way to prepare for the coming of Jesus?

Do:

Make up today with someone

With a child:

Make an origami peace crane and hang it in a high visibility place (*do a google search for dozens of free instructions*)

Tuesday Nov. 29

Read Romans 13:11-14



Reflect:

How might you “dress up” your conduct? Language? Attitude? Politeness?

Do:

Write down how you will “dress up” your conduct in preparation for Jesus.

With a child:

What clothes might be given to the needy?

Wednesday Nov. 30

Read: Matthew 21: 42-44



Reflect:

When family is coming to visit, what is the first part of your place you straighten up? What would you straighten up first in your life if Jesus was coming?

Do:

Work at straightening #2 above.

With a Child:

Clean up a part of the home together for your guest Jesus who is coming.

Thursday Dec. 1

Read: I Corinthians 1:3-9



Reflect:

What spiritual gifts has God given to you to help watch for his coming? Compassion? Music?

Do:

Volunteer in a way that uses your gifts. after school mentoring or sing in the choir

With a child:

Make a plan to go caroling with a group or as a family.

Friday Dec. 2

Read: Mark 13: 33-37



Reflect:

Make a list of those things that you routinely “watch” for in order to avoid being “surprised.” What things in your life should you be watching in preparation for the return of Christ?

Do:

Make a prayer list of those things in your life that you wish to change.

With a child:

Look at how binoculars make far away things seem close just like the coming of Jesus.

Saturday Dec. 3

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16



Reflect:

What promises have you made over the years that you have not kept? Is it ever too late to keep them?

Do:

Make a list of unkept promises you made and check them off as you fulfill them (or try to fulfill them).

With a child:

Talk about how important it is to keep the promises we make. Just like God kept his promise to send Jesus to save us.

The Origins of Advent

The season of Advent has evolved in the life of the Church. The historical origins of Advent are hard to determine with precision. Beginning in France, Advent was a period of preparation for the Feast of the Epiphany, a day when converts were baptized. Therefore, the Advent preparation was very similar to Lent with an emphasis on prayer and fasting

which lasted three weeks and later was expanded to 40 days. In 380 a.d., the local Council of Saragossa, Spain, established a three-week fast before Epiphany. Inspired by the Lenten regulations, the local Council of Macon, France, in 581 designated that from Nov. 11 (the Feast of St. Martin of Tours) until Christmas fasting would be required on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Eventually, similar practices spread to England. In Rome, the Advent preparation did not appear until the sixth century, and was viewed as a preparation for Christmas with less of a penitential bent.

The Church gradually formalized the celebration of Advent. The Gelasian Sacramentary, was the first to provide Advent liturgies for five Sundays. Later, Pope Gregory I (d. 604) enhanced these liturgies composing prayers, antiphons, readings, and responses. Pope Gregory VII (d. 1095) later reduced the number of Sundays in Advent to four. Finally, about the ninth century, the Church designated the first Sunday of Advent as the beginning of the Church year.