

Sunday and Feast Day Liturgical Notes for Priests and Deacons

Suggestions for Leading Worship



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RE: Liturgical Suggestions for the First Sunday of Advent – Cycle B

Sunday date: November 29-30, 2008

Dear Fathers and Deacons,

An Overview...

In the Introduction to the *Roman Missal*, Advent is defined as a time of preparation for Christmas when the first coming of the Son of God is recalled, and also as a season of preparation for Christ's second coming at the end of time. It is a season of joyful and spiritual expectation.

Advent is considered the beginning of the Church year. However, the season's origins can be traced to the fourth century. The custom of placing the Advent texts at the beginning of the liturgical books was not common until the eighth and ninth centuries. Furthermore, THE celebration of the Church year has always been Easter.

There is a continuity in the liturgical year, and its cyclical character where one season follows closely upon another. This is noted when the theme of the last Sundays of the preceding Church year are in harmony with those of the First Sunday of Advent, about the second coming of Christ. This is clear in Cycle B where the Gospel of the First Sunday of Advent is taken from Mark's chapter 13, the eschatological teaching of Jesus on the end of this age and need for watchfulness.

Taken together, the four Sundays of Advent are a progression from reflection on the end of time when Christ will return to bring time to an end, to His incarnation when a new era of time was begun for humankind. In each cycle, the First Sunday of Advent is always eschatological, with

the prayers of the Missal speaking of our being called to his side in the Kingdom. On the Second and Third Sundays St. John the Baptist emerges. The Fourth Sunday emphasis is on the coming commemoration of the birth of Jesus. In Cycle B, the Fourth Sunday focuses on the Virgin, with the Annunciation scene being described.

This First Sunday of Advent in Cycle B provides Lectionary readings with an urgency that the Lord accomplish his plan now, and that the still unfulfilled promise of the Kingdom come to pass.

Faith Sharing Questions...

1. What do you think about when you hear that we are living in the “in between times,” i.e., the time between the first coming of Jesus and the final coming of Jesus?
2. In Mark’s Gospel, the doorkeeper is to be on watch for the master’s return. What does that mean in your life?

Some Other Considerations As You Prepare...

1. A possible Penitential Rite could be: “Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of your kingdom, Lord, have mercy; Lord Jesus, you come in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness, Christ, have mercy; Lord Jesus, you will come in glory with salvation for your people, Lord, have mercy”
2. Note that the Gloria is omitted during this season.
3. For the Opening Prayer, option one is the more ancient and recommended.
4. There is a Blessing of an Advent Wreath in the *Book of Blessings*, and it indicates that the blessing could occur as a conclusion to the Intercessory Prayers. Cf. the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 47.
5. The Preface for Advent I is prescribed.
6. There is a special Solemn Blessing for Advent as well.

Looking Ahead...

1. Monday, December 8, is a holyday of obligation, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Make sure your Mass times are publicized.
2. It’s not too early to publicize the parish’s and deanery’s Penance Services for Advent.
3. Special focus on the Stewardship of Prayer is often done at the beginning of Advent. If so, you will need to adjust to accommodate whatever procedures you will be using for the Stewardship process during Mass.

Sample Intercessory Prayers for the First Sunday of Advent

Priest: As Advent time unfolds, let us be watchful in hope as we offer our prayers to the Lord.

Deacon (or other reader or cantor if there is no deacon):

1. For the Church in the world; for Benedict, our Pope, and Robert, our Bishop; may the grace of Advent be ours in patience and peace, we pray to the Lord...
2. For a time of peace instead of war; for nations to seek new ways to live together on this earth, we pray to the Lord...
3. For those who long for God to act with power in their powerless lives; for the poor of health; the poor of food, housing, security and freedom; for God's healing upon the wounds of conflict and division, we pray to the Lord...
4. For our parish; may we be vigilant and watchful at the door of the Lord's return, we pray to the Lord...
5. For all of us who are learning to pray; for those who pray constantly for the Lord's grace and mercy, we pray to the Lord...
6. For our beloved dead; may they rest in peace, we pray to the Lord...
7. In peace and in silence, we offer our prayers to the Father...

[pause; the presider alone concludes]

Priest: Loving God of all times and seasons,
hear our prayers, and
grant them in your mercy,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.