

Advent: Fifth and Sixth

Name of Pupil: _____

Advent is a time when we prepare for Christmas. It is the beginning of the Church's calendar. As it is a time of waiting, preparing and looking forward to remembering the birth of Jesus and how God is present in our world we use symbols such as the Jesse Tree, an Advent Calendar and the Advent Wreath to help us focus on and pray during this time of hope.

The following are some of the readings used during this time.

God Sends the Angel Gabriel to Zechariah (Luke 1:8-24)

One day Zechariah was doing his work as a priest in the Temple, taking his turn in the daily service. According to the custom followed by the priests, he was chosen by lot to burn incense on the altar. So he went into the Temple of the Lord, while the crowd of people outside prayed during the hour when incense was burned. An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar where the incense was burned. When Zechariah saw him, he was alarmed and felt afraid. But the angel said to him, 'Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. You are to name him John. How glad and happy you will be, and how happy many others will be when he is born! John will be great in the Lord's sight. He must not drink any wine or strong drink.

From his very birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go ahead of the Lord, strong and mighty like the prophet Elijah. He will bring fathers and children together again; he will turn disobedient people back to the way of thinking of the righteous; he will get the Lord's people ready for him.' Zechariah said to the angel, 'How shall I know if this is so? I am an old man, and my wife is old also.' 'I am Gabriel,' the angel answered. 'I stand in the presence of God, who sent me to speak to you and tell you this good news. But you have not believed my message, which will come true at the right time. Because you have not believed, you will remain silent until the

day my promise to you comes true.' In the meantime the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondered why he was spending such a long time in the Temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them, and so they knew that he had seen a vision in the Temple. Unable to say a word, he made signs to them with his hands. When his period of service in the Temple was over, Zechariah went back home. Sometime later his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and did not leave the house for five months.

(Questions from GIL)

- How do you think Zechariah felt when he heard that his prayer was being answered and he was going to have a son?
- Do you think you would have believed the angel if you had been in Zechariah's place? Why or why not?
- How do you think Zechariah felt as he waited for his son to be born? What do you think Zechariah looked forward to the most: the birth of his son, his speech returning, or something else? Why?
- What times of waiting have you experienced? What was waiting like?

Write or draw any thoughts you have on reflecting on the above.

The Birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57-66)

The time came for Elizabeth to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard how wonderfully good the Lord had been to her, and they all rejoiced with her. When the baby was a week old, ... they were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. But his mother said, 'No! His name is to be John.' They said to her, 'But you don't have any relative with that name!' Then they made signs to his father, asking him what name he would like the boy to have. Zechariah asked for a writing pad and wrote, 'His name is John.' How surprised they all were! At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he started praising God. The neighbours were all filled with fear, and the news about these things spread through all the hill country of Judea. Everyone who heard of it thought about it and asked, 'What is this child going to be?' For it was plain that the Lord's power was upon him.

(From GIL programme)

- In the time of Jesus, Jewish parents chose names for their children because of their meaning and not because of how they sounded. The name Zechariah means 'remembered by God', the name Elizabeth means 'one who gives loyalty to God', the name John means 'God is gracious', and the name Jesus means 'God saves'. We celebrate the birthday of St John the Baptist on 24 June.
- Who gave you your name? Do you know why you were given your name?

WATCH, WAIT, WONDER!

• Advent is a time of waiting watching, wondering. During Advent we watch, wait and wonder as we prepare to celebrate the birth the Jesus.

Complete these sentences:

During Advent I will watch for

During Advent I will wait for

During Advent I will wonder about

Record through word or image what you will watch for, wait for, wonder about...

Joseph's Dream (Matthew 1:18-24)

Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately. While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus - because he will save his people from their sins.' Now all this happened in order to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, 'A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel' (which means 'God is with us'). So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to.

Record by word or by drawing a picture of a dream you may have had or the dream that Joseph had in the above story.

(from the 6th class programme)

About seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah foretold that God would send the people a Saviour, who would bring them peace and love. Isaiah told the people that the Saviour would be a descendant of King David. Jesus was of the family of King David, just as Isaiah had foretold. During Advent we listen at Mass to many of the things Isaiah said to prepare the people for the coming of the Saviour.

Prophecies of Isaiah: Here are two of those statements from Isaiah;

A child is born to us! A son is given to us! And he will be our ruler: He will be called, 'Wonderful Counsellor', 'Mighty-God', 'Eternal Father', 'Prince-of-Peace'. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David's descendants. (Isaiah 11:1)

THE JESSE TREE: Jesse was the father of King David. The Jesse Tree, which is a symbol used during advent, it is an image in art used to represent the ancestors of Christ. Jesus was descended from King David, and Jesse was King David's father. The Jesse Tree represents the story of God's Chosen People up to the time when Jesus was born.

These are the Jesse Tree symbols and what they represent.

Apple: Adam and Eve

Ark: Noah and the Flood

Dove: Abraham, the father of God's people

Dagger: Sacrifice of Isaac

Ladder: Jacob's ladder

Wheat: Joseph feeds God's people

Staff: Moses leads the people out of Egypt

Stone tablets: Moses and the Ten Commandments

Scroll: Isaiah's prophecy

House: Jesse's house in Bethlehem

Harp: King David the Harpist

Crown: King Solomon

Hammer: Joseph the Carpenter

Rose: Mary, Mother of Jesus

Writing board and pen: John the Baptist

Star: Jesus, Saviour of the World

Draw your image of the Jesse Tree

Prepare the Way

Prepare the way for Jesus, open up your heart.

Don't leave it till tomorrow.

Make a start.

In all your preparations, remember why he came.

That's why the feast of Christmas Bears his name.

With all the fuss and shopping, don't forget to pray

That peace will reign supreme On Christmas Day.

Sing songs of praise and carols about the birth of Christ the king,

The magi, and the gifts

They chose to bring.

Remember, too, the shepherds, who believed the angels' word,

And treasured in their hearts

What they had heard.

Prepare your heart for Jesus in a very special way,

Reserve a place for him

On Christmas Day.

by Maria O'Rourke

Record by drawing or writing your thoughts on how you will prepare your heart for Jesus.