

first SUNDAY OF ADVENT



■ LIGHT THE ADVENT WREATH

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ... Come Lord Jesus, be our light! Help us prepare our hearts for your coming at Christmas.

■ READ THE GOSPEL for the First Sunday of Advent (Cycle A) Matthew 24:37-44

"Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come."

■ REFLECT WITH A STORY

Jesus gives us a very clear image in this Sunday's Gospel: a thief in the night. Of course, we say, if we knew the hour that someone was going to break into our house, we would be prepared! We would call the police. We would lock the doors. We would make sure all of our valuables were hidden away. But, as Jesus points out, we so rarely can know in advance when such things will happen. The only real solution is to plan ahead—and be prepared.

Joseph Muchina, the director of Trinity Jewellery Crafts in Nairobi, Kenya, helps us understand what it means to prepare. Joseph grew up in a very poor community and didn't know where his next meal would come from. He learned that it is impossible to be prepared for unexpected challenges—like getting sick, for example—when you don't have any extra money.

Joseph cofounded Trinity Jewellery so he could help other people in his community have a more stable income and be better prepared for emergencies. The people who work at Trinity take part in a savings plan where they can save 10 percent of their income to prepare for the future.

Planning ahead for what we can expect, as well as for events that are simply unpredictable, is the kind of preparation we're called to during Advent. When Jesus tells us to "stay awake" in the Gospel, he's not saying we should never go to sleep! Rather, he is encouraging us to ready our hearts for what's to come. We can do this by asking ourselves what we need to change in our lives in order to better love ourselves, our neighbors and our God. By reflecting on the changes we need to make, we prepare our hearts to welcome Christ into our lives in a new way this Christmas.



Photo by Brian Backe/CRS

PRAY

Christ Jesus, you want to make a home in my heart this Christmas. Help me to use this Advent season as a time to better prepare for your coming. Amen

REFLECT

What changes do you want to make in your life this Advent to be ready for Christ at Christmas?

ACT

Make a list of small acts of kindness you can perform throughout Advent. Each week, select a different one, and remember that you are performing them for Christ in preparation for Christmas.

GIVE

Help families like Joseph's prepare for unexpected challenges by purchasing handmade jewelry. Your commitment to buying ethically produced gifts like Trinity Jewellery, allows families like Joseph's the opportunity to save for the future. Visit crsfairtrade.org.