Armor of light • Breaking open the word

Readings

Isaiah 2:1-5
O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Romans 13:11-14
Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light;

Matthew 24:37-44
“So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

You can read the full text of this Sunday’s readings here:

Scriptures for the First Sunday of Advent, Cycle A

Reflection

The first reading tells of a time when everyone will look for God to instruct us. They will go to the mountain, Zion, which represents a sort of perfected, spiritual Israel. They will be open to what God has to say to them, and God will “impose terms” on them—terms of peace. All instruments of war will be reshaped into harvesting tools. Instead of fighting each other, we will gather each other in to God’s Kingdom. This is how we are invited to “walk in the light of the Lord.”

And, speaking of light, Paul’s letter to the Romans gives us some hints on how to walk in that light. Paul exhorts us to recognize that night is almost over—this has a lot of meanings: the darkness of being separated from God, the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of sin, and for us today

it’s about the darkness of the winter solstice that ushers in the longer days as we look forward to spring. We are told to “throw off the works of darkness” and clothe ourselves with “the armor of light.” When we move away from sin (the works of darkness) and surround ourselves with the light of Jesus’ love, there’s no room for the darkness to touch us.

Finally, the Gospel brings us to the Second Coming (like last week!), because the whole purpose of the first coming (Jesus’ birth) was to prepare us for going to Zion—the New Jerusalem—heaven. Jesus says that everybody will be going about their business and then, when God sees fit, we will be called home. Some will be about the business of God—living the way that Jesus instructed us, and some will be about the business of the world—many of the things Paul warns us against in the second reading. But, we all have the same opportunity to know and serve God; that’s up to each one of us. Advent is a time to consider how much light we choose, and how much darkness we allow into our lives.

Break open the word with your family

Kids

Can you think of an Advent tradition that has to do with light? (for example: lights on the house, lights on the Christmas tree, Advent wreath candles…) What do you think those lights represent? What do they remind you of?

Teens

What do you think of that image of the “armor of light”? What do you think Paul intended us to get from it? How can it apply to your life?

Adults

Share your favorite Advent tradition or Christmas memory from

your childhood (or your children's childhood). Why is it meaningful to you? Invite the rest of the family to chime in!

A little lectio

The ancient practice of prayerfully reflecting on bits of Scripture is known as *lectio divina*. Want to try it out with your family? Head over to Lectio Divina for Kids to find out how to adapt this prayer practice for your kids.

A little Bible study

Want to do a little Bible study with your kids? Here are some tips:

- During Ordinary Time, the Church pairs the Old Testament and New Testament readings in a way that each sheds light on the other. Ask your kids to look for the common theme connecting the two readings. (Sometimes it's obvious, sometimes it is subtle.) How does the "dialogue" between the readings help you understand them better?
- Get a New American Bible, Revised Edition, and take a look at the footnotes for these readings. How do they change your understanding of what is going on?
- Take a look at the context for the readings—what happens before, or after?
- Read the NABRE's introduction to the book of the Bible that the readings are taken from. How does that help you understand the readings?
- If you don't have a copy of the NABRE at home, you can view it online at the USCCB website at the Daily Readings web page.

For even more resources for breaking open this Sunday's readings, head over to The Sunday Website.