

Cycle B

First Sunday of Advent

Lectionary #2

Reading I: Isaiah 63: 16b-17, 19b, 64: 2-7

The season of Advent begins a new liturgical year. Advent is a time for waiting, but the waiting is not of a passive nature but rather one that focuses on being **vigilant** and active in the waiting process. This first reading expresses a **vigilant** waiting as a petition for the Lord to make himself known, to reveal his presence. The prophet recalls, that in the past, God has made his presence known through mighty deeds and implores the Lord to so again. **Vigilance**, on the part of all of us, is indeed necessary for God will reveal God's self according to God's timeline.

Reading 2: I Corinthians 1: 3-9

Saint Paul encourages the church at Corinth to wait and to be **vigilant** in their waiting for the return of the Christ. He applauds the Corinthians for their faithfulness. Saint Paul makes it clear that while the Corinthians have much to be proud of in the progress of their faith, the gifts of the Church come from the *grace of God* and are intended to prepare the Corinthians for *the day of the Lord, Jesus Christ*. Here again **vigilance** is the operative word and practice.

Gospel: Mark 13: 33-37

The Gospel selection follows the theme of **vigilant** waiting for the coming of the Lord. The first two Sundays of Advent focus on the "Second Coming of Christ" at the end time, while the third and fourth Sundays of Advent focus on the historical event of God's incarnation in the person of Jesus. This short passage from Saint Mark's Gospel is filled with **vigilant** and active waiting language; "*Be watchful! Be alert!*" This alert is intended for all who wish to follow Jesus Christ.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



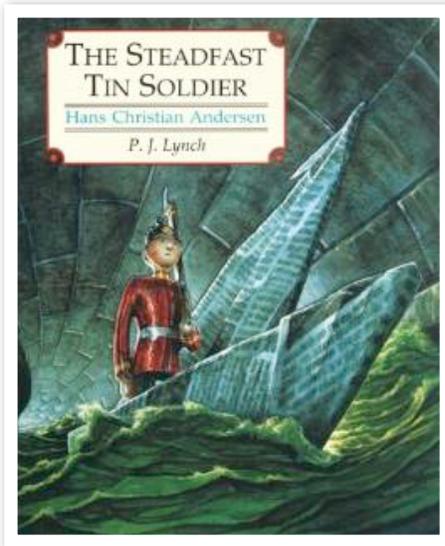
advent



lectionary
reading



children's
story



The Steadfast Tin Soldier

Written by Hans Christian Andersen

Illustrated by P.J.Lynch, Trans: Naomie Lewis

Publisher: 2005 Andersen Press

ISBN-10: 1842704435

ISBN-13: 978-1842704431



character
education
activity

Vigilance is the quality that allows one to maintain focus over prolonged periods of time.

The Steadfast Tin Soldier

Central to this story is the Tin Soldier's **vigilance** and unwavering sense of duty in the face of many hardships and challenges. It stands as a story that defies that physical death as the end, but rather speaks to the eternal nature of love. The conclusion symbolizes love's eternal nature, as the story ends with all but the Tin Soldier's heart being consumed. **(Caveat)** This story does not have the traditional "happy ending" so the choice to use it should be determined by the age and maturity level of the audience and the comfort level of the teacher in fielding the emotions of the children.

Activity

Step One: Invite the students to make a list of new things that they would like to learn or accomplish. After assembling that list they will need to choose what "new thing" they would be capable of attempting at their current age, strength and ability. Certainly they may need guidance so that what they choose might be attainable.

Step Two: Teach the students how to do a "backward plan" so that they may develop a list of skills and a timeline to achieve their "new thing."

Step Three: Once they have developed a list of skills sets and a time line help them form a chart to assess their progress and the **vigilance** and steadfastness necessary to advance from one stage to another in the process.

Vigilance is the quality that encourages us to use all of our senses to be aware of what is occurring around us.



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

It is one thing to have a dream. For a dream to become a reality, time, effort and patience must accompany the dream. Just as achieving something new in the physical world takes planning, time, commitment and patience (all elements that comprise the quality of **vigilance**) so to do those parts of us in our spiritual dimension. What would it be like to advance in our relationship with God? Once we have answered this question, (and there may indeed be many answers) we could choose one and establish a “backward plan” with concrete steps and a time line. One such thing might be developing an Advent Calendar of events that will lead us to advancement in our relationship with God as we approach the great feast of the Nativity of the Lord.

Look Feel Know Act

Waiting can be seen as boring, however when the church invites us to wait during the season of Advent, it is an invitation for us to be active in our waiting by being **vigilant** and steadfast. Patience is a very important part of being **vigilant**. We all wait for many things in life and waiting can be an opportunity to be prayerful and reflective. Say you are waiting in line for some service or event, you could use that time to pray or reflect. Generations of Catholics have prayed the rosary while waiting in lines, thus making their waiting “active .” You may wish to develop some prayer or reflective activity that would be comfortable and natural to you so that when the “waiting” opportunity presents itself you are prepared to be active in your waiting.

Each of us will find ourselves in situations that will offer us the opportunity to learn how to wait patiently, to be **vigilant** and to be steadfast. In the Andersen's story of *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, we can see a parallel of the tenacity of the Tin Soldier in facing his adversities and the call to be patient and **vigilant** we hear in the gospel passage for this First Sunday of Advent.



**closing
tool**

Pray that you will always be vigilant in offering God prayers of adoration, reparation and thanksgiving. Amen.



**Santa Clara
University**

Character Education at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics
ethics programs for communities that learn, live, pray, or work together

www.scu.edu/character