



HOLD YOUR HEADS UP HIGH!

St Mary's Way Values: Challenge; Freedom.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sky and in the heavens. On earth, people will be confused and nervous about the future. Then they will see the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things start to happen, stand up straight and hold your heads up high because freedom is coming.

Stay awake and pray always that you will have the strength to go safely through all those things that will happen before you stand before the Son of Man."



Day 1: This week is the first week of Advent, the 4 week period before Christmas. Advent means 'coming' or arrival,' and is basically a preparation time— a time for taking stock and reflecting. The readings during this time focus on 2 things: the historical event of Jesus' birth and the Christian hope that He will return at the end of time, which is the focus of this week's reading.

Advent is supposed to make us take time to prepare rather than jump straight ahead to Christmas. That's a bit difficult when the decorations are already up and we're already sick of the adverts on TV.

Discuss/ Reflect:

- Why is it sometimes good to wait?
- What's wrong with the attitude, 'I want it now!' ?

Father, help us to find time in our hectic, busy lives to stop and think. Help us to find time to be thankful for the good things we have received. Help us find time for other people, and especially those who are dearest to us. Help us find time for ourselves, to remember who we are, where we have come from and where we am going. And help us to find time for you, so that we can draw on your strength and peace. Amen.

Practical suggestion:

The Advent Wreath is a popular symbol of Advent. Traditionally, it was made by taking the wheels off the carts and covering them with evergreens. This symbolised an end to work, the chance to stop and take a step back. Make an Advent Wreath as a class: Write an Advent prayer or hope on a holly leaf shape and stick them together in a circle. You could display them in the classroom as a reminder of the need to take some time out to reflect this month.

Video:

Take a look at the video "Advent in 2 minutes" which explains the reason for the season.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S02KO1w7dIA>

Day 2: Led by 9X1. In our Gospel this week, Jesus tells us what to expect at the end of times:

There will be signs in the sky and in the heavens... Then they will see the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory.

At this time of year, everyone thinks of the beginning of the story- the birth of Jesus in a stable- but this week, Advent starts with the end of the story. 9X1 were very puzzled by this. Before we celebrate his birth at Christmas, we remember why Jesus was important. This week, Jesus tells us he is coming to clear up the mess we've made and make things right again. The problem is that sometimes when we see the mess, it blocks our view of the good things. 9X1 thought this was represented by the hope and the light.

Discuss/ Reflect:

- What clutters up your life?
- What are the signs in our world that things are not quite right?
- Why do we need light in our lives?

Loving Father in heaven, may you bring safety and warmth to those in need around this Christmas time. Allow them to spend your birthday with their friends and family. Amen.



Day 3: Jesus said that when difficult times come, we should:

'stand up straight and hold our heads up high'.

That's probably the opposite of what we feel like doing! When we are worried or discouraged, our heads go down. It's like we have an extra weight on our shoulders. We look at the ground rather than at the heavens. Jesus wants to lift the burden from us. He wants to give us self-belief and inner confidence so that we can straighten up.

Discuss/ Reflect:

- What knocks your confidence and makes you feel low?
- How does your self-belief get built up again? How can you encourage others?

Father, help us to believe in ourselves – not so that we think we are better than others but so that we have the strength to be kinder and more loving. Help us to build up and encourage others. Amen.

Day 4: This week, Jesus encourages us to be confident and positive. But how can we do this? Well one of his answers is:

'Freedom is coming!'

We talk a lot about freedom. Usually what we mean by freedom is being able to do what we like when we like. That is freedom without responsibility. The freedom that Jesus promises is good for us all – freedom to be our true selves but also to let others be their true selves too.

Discuss' Reflect:

- What is freedom? What would you like to be freed from?
- What are the good and bad things about freedom?

Spend some time reflecting on those things that hold you down or stop you from being the person you want to be. Think about how you can be 'freed' from the negative forces in your life. Pray for the strength you need to overcome these barriers.