

Our Sabbath Scripture Stories



F A M I L I E S R E C L A I M I N G S U N D A Y

Read aloud: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
 John 1:6-8, 19-28

Two of the candles already burned brightly on the Advent wreath this Sunday. Soon a third candle would be lit. Mom even got out her special long stick matches for the "lighting ceremony."

"Mom, I thought those matches were only used for the fireplace!" Vincent commented. "When you light one of those matches, it is almost as big as the candle itself!"

Mom laughed. "Well, not quite, Vincent!" she said. "These matches are big, but they aren't anywhere near the brightness and energy power of our Advent candle."

So with a shrug, Vincent took his place at the dining room table for the official "Third Sunday of Advent Candle Lighting Ceremony."

Mom began the ceremony with a prayer: *"Holy God, You sent Your beloved Son, Jesus, into the world as a light that would shine in the darkness. With each of these candles that we light, may we rekindle our love for Him and for the truth and light He brings. May all the radiance of His love come upon each one of us now as we light this candle. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."*

Slowly, Mom took the long match and struck it soundly. It brought forth a warm glow as she moved it toward the Advent wreath. Soon that glow became even bigger and brighter as the Advent candle took flame.

"Now, my fine family," Mom said, "we are all going to listen attentively to your father as he reads the Gospel reading for this morning."

Mr. Pauline opened his Bible and read the Gospel of John, Chapter 1. When he was finished, a very animated Vincent caught his eye.

"Start over, start over!" Vincent chided his dad.

"Why start over, Vincent?" Dad asked him. "Couldn't you hear the passage?"

Oh, I heard it all right, Dad!" Vincent laughed. "In fact, I heard it last week! You must have gotten mixed up and read last week's Gospel!"

Dad and Mom could only smile. How well they remember learning the ways of the liturgical readings and thinking the same thing for years.

"Sorry, Vincent, no mistake," Dad laughed. "I bet you think this is the same reading as last week because it is all about John the Baptist and how he talks about being 'a voice in the desert ...' Is that it?"

"Well, yeah." Vincent acknowledged. "I know we just heard this reading!"

"Absolutely right ... and wrong, Vincent," Dad told him. "Last week we heard Mark's account of this very same appearance of John the Baptist. This week we hear the parallel account by John. Two Gospel writers ... same message."

"So John the Baptist is out there again this week preceding Jesus!" Vincent grinned.

"Absolutely, Vincent," Mom answered. "John is still out there lighting the spark."

Just then, Mom's eyes enlarged, and she got a cunning grin on her face. Mom stood back again by the Advent wreath and purposely blew out the third candle.

"Mom, what did you do that for?" the kids all exclaimed.



Mom took another long match and struck it until it glowed. She held it up and simply said, "John ... " Then, going to the third candle and relighting it, she said, "Jesus ... " Once more she moved it back and forth. "John ... Jesus ... !"

"Kids, don't you see?" she questioned. "John is like the match! People in our Gospel reading thought John was the Messiah, the Light of the World. But he kept telling them that One will come after me that is bigger and brighter. That's just like our candle here! The match comes before the candle, it *illuminates* the candle, just like John *illuminated* people about Jesus. The candle gives light and warmth in the darkness ... this is so cool!"

Mom sat down in her chair, pumped up and energized. In her heart of hearts, she knew that her allusion to the match and candle had made a profound and everlasting impact on her family. But the faces around her told a different story.

"Mom ... " Vincent said softly, tenderly, and ever so carefully. "We all love you, Mom, but really ... the candle and the match ... I hate to say this ... but ... that is really stretching it!"