

Prepare as if He were to come today

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 13:33-37; (R1) Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 54:2-7; (R2) 1 Corinthians 1:3-9.

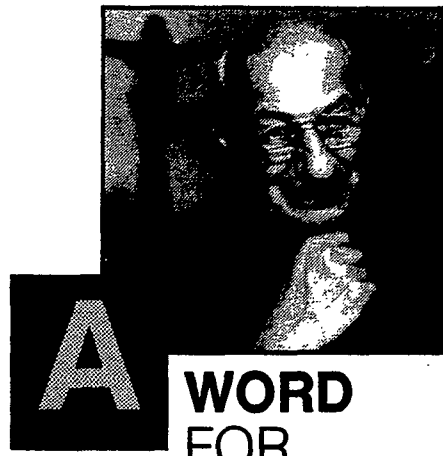
One day when I was instructing an eighth-grade class about Advent, I brought a doll with me into the classroom. I shook the doll and said, "Wake up! It's time to get up!" The dumb doll said nothing, but slept on. So again, I shook the doll and said, "Wake up! You'll be late for school. You'll miss the bus." There was, of course, no response.

So I said to the class, "You see, this doll has ears, and yet it doesn't hear. I could talk to it for hours and get nowhere." Then I would ask the class, "Do you know what I'm driving at?"

Some people are just like the doll. Although they have ears, they don't hear. You can talk to them till you're blue in the face and they just don't seem to hear what you are saying.

Actually, that is why the church, year after year, starts all over again and repeats the same old message. The church hopes that maybe someday we'll hear and listen and wake up.

So next Sunday, another church year begins with another Advent.



WORD FOR SUNDAY

Advent means "to come." Oh, you've heard that before.

Advent celebrates the three comings of the Lord. His first coming in history, at Bethlehem; His second coming in mystery, at baptism and at every Mass; His third coming in majesty, at the end of the world — "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The church speaks of these three comings of Christ. His coming in the past, in history, to teach us that God cares and loves us. His coming in the

present, in mystery, to teach us that God wants to save us. And His coming in the future, in majesty, to teach us to prepare ourselves now, to wake up.

Yet do we listen? How often we think of salvation, like the Jews of old. They misconstrued redemption to mean deliverance from enemies, slavery and oppression.

Don't we make the same mistake? What others do very often speaks so loudly that we don't hear what God is constantly doing for us. As a result we are liable to think of redemption as being a deliverance from the sins of others against us: their rash judgments of us, their misunderstandings that hurt us, their injustices, petty persecutions of us at home or at work.

When we go to confession and say we are uncharitable, don't we say this, because we are too preoccupied with the sins of others against us, because we resent them, because we are reacting against them or talking about them.

It is wrong to listen to what others have done to us and not to hear what Jesus is coming to do for us.

So every year the church at Advent repeats the same old message: don't be listening to what others are doing

to you; try to hear what Jesus is doing for you — He loves you, He cares for you, He forgives you. He is calling you to love, to care, to forgive. Can't you hear Him? Or are you deaf like the dumb old doll?

Some years ago, a tourist visited a Castle Villa Asconti on the shores of Lake Como in northern Italy. The only one to meet and greet him was an old gardener. Everything was in perfect order.

The visitor asked the gardener when the owner had last been there.

"Twelve years ago," answered the gardener.

"Does he ever write?"

"No."

"Where do you get your instructions?"

"From his agent in Milan."

"Doesn't the master ever come?"

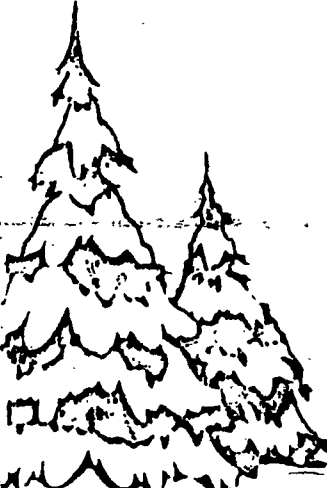
"No!"

"But you keep the grounds as if your master were coming tomorrow."

The old gardener corrected him and said, "Today, sir, today." Everything was manicured as if the master were coming today.

So it is with Christ. He came, He will come. But more important, He comes, not tomorrow, but today.

Are we awake? Are we prepared?



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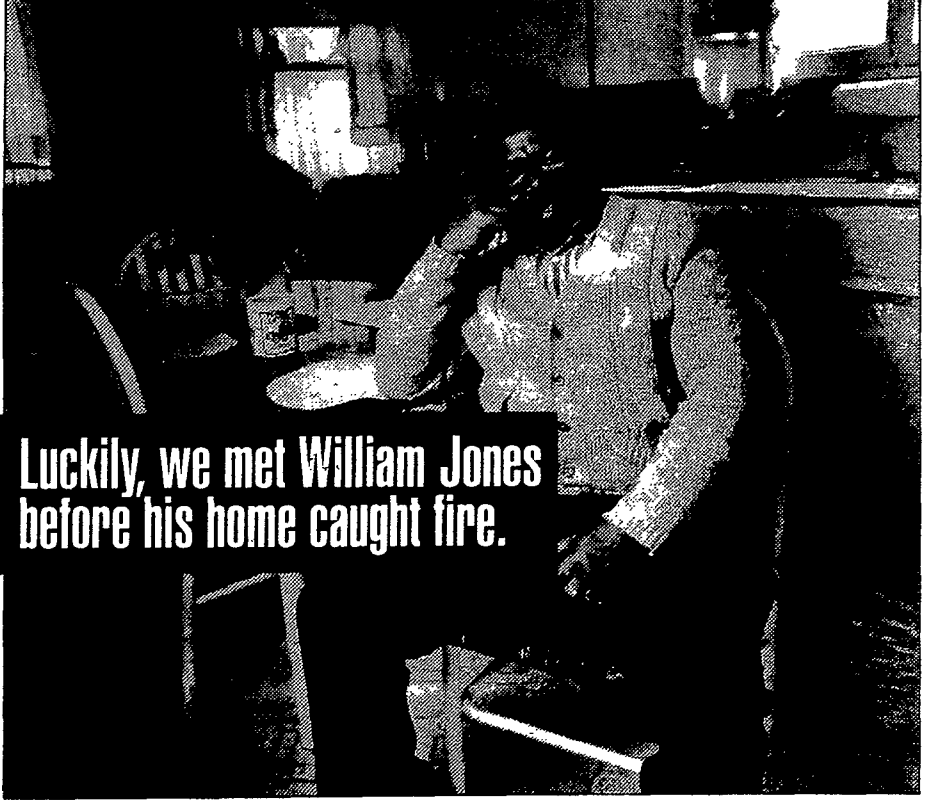
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DATES: 11/25, 12/2, 12/9, 12/16

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Kids' Chronicle Answer Key

1. goats 2. sheep 3. dove
4. dogs 5. eagle 6. fish
7. foxes 8. frogs 9. ram
10. horse



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