

A NOTE TO PARENTS

"They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Isaiah 2:4

"The night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light ..."

Romans 13:11

Once I watched as my daughter and five friends played in the back yard. They were playing Peter Pan: Wendy, Peter, Tinkerbell and various extras engaged in prolonged struggles with Captain Hook, using garden stakes, sticks, and a plastic baseball bat. Positions were captured and defended, weapons seized and stockpiled.

I could have gone over and asked them to stop playing war—to play at being people of peace, who listen and share and negotiate solutions to their conflicts, as so many Sunday School lessons recommend. But I don't think they were, in fact, "playing war," in the sense of pretending to use weapons aggressively to inflict pain and destruction. Instead, they were deeply engaged in a drama about good and evil, and they were rehearsing the terribly important job of taking sides in that drama, with all their heart and soul and strength, even if it is dangerous, laborious, and costly. To censor that play by commending instead an adult-level, abstract, negotiation process is to short-circuit one of childhood's normal means of developing moral courage, the sense of justice, and the capacity for sustained effort and sacrifice.

Captain Hook and the dragons and monsters of children's imaginations do not represent people with whom we have a conflict; they represent the power of evil in ourselves and the whole world, which is not to be negotiated with or placated or washed over in pastel colors, but faced and struggled against. Putting on the armor of light does not mean we will grow up to wage "holy war" against human enemies; but it does mean learning that goodness and peace require work, and struggle, and sometimes pain and loss and sacrifice. And the way children process that learning is through play.

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Year A
1st SUNDAY
in ADVENT



THIS IS THE SEASON OF ADVENT.

ADVENT is the beginning of a new year in the church. Advent means "coming." Christmas is coming.



In Advent, we remember how Jesus came, to share our life and our death.



We wait for Jesus to come again, and be our King.



We wait for him to bring us his Kingdom of Peace.



ADVENT is a time of waiting. We are waiting for Christmas. We are waiting for Jesus. We are waiting for God's Kingdom of Peace.

While we wait, we can be getting ready. We can get ready for Christmas. And we can get ready for Jesus our King, and for God's Kingdom of Peace, by being people of love and peace.



Draw the sun coming up in this picture. The Bible says that God's Kingdom is like the day dawning after a long, dark night. It tells us to be awake and ready!