

Advent



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*You are a God
who does so
much for those
who hope in
you!*



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Introduction

Once again we begin to walk through the time of Advent in the midst of many voices that range from excessive commercialization of the Christmas theme to the sad demands for the so-called “Christmas bonus” that organized criminals implement during this time. We ask ourselves once again: What are we talking about when we mention the word “Christmas” or “Nativity” ((Birth of Jesus)?

It is difficult for people to be in agreement about this. The owners of a superstore expect to increase their sales in “the best season of the year.” The alcoholic beverage industry invites [the public] to celebrate Christmas parties with their intoxicating beverages. Common delinquents increase their activities due to the need for more money to purchase holiday gifts. The pyrotechnics industry rushes the hands of child laborers so that there will be more fireworks and polluting smoke for Christmas and the New Year. The workers lament the high cost of living and complain that now they won’t be able to obtain what they had wanted. Widows, widowers, and orphaned children, grieve their loved one who is now absent as a result of the violence. Someone in the church joyfully sings about the coming of the Savior of the world to bring peace on earth. Such contrasts!

We face the challenge of reflecting once again, of re-thinking, of rescuing the concept and practice of Christmas according to the word of God. How much one should confront the powers of this world becomes a difficult challenge. Nevertheless, there should be a pronouncement, perhaps a prophecy, which resists the normalization of a stingy party that clothes itself in Christian piety. We don’t need a stupefying occasion that will distance us from our reality and that of our neighbor. As long as we have evidence neither of a culture of peace, nor of development and dignity for Guatemalans, what are we speaking of when we mention the word “Christmas”?

Advent invites us to this reflection, to return to the deep meaning of the Nativity, to “prepare the way of the Lord,” according to the hope and practice in Jesus Christ. In the midst of darkness and gloom, Advent brings us closer to the light that came, and is coming, to this world in order to provoke (catalyze) the liberating transformations in all realms of life.

CEDEPCA participates in another year of this important Advent tradition and invites those who long to, to accompany CEDEPCA during this time of waiting, of hoping, of preparing for Christmas, the birth of Jesus in his living and contextual expression. In virtue of this, the current material attempts to help with biblical meditation, prayer, and the coherent practice of our faith during the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas Day.

We thank our special collaborator, Dr. Violeta Rocha, who has written the biblical reflections for this edition of Advent 2017. Her contribution enriches the content of this material and guides us toward a more coherent celebration.

May faith and hope strengthen and be reborn in each person, family and community as we proclaim that the presence of Jesus, the true light that illuminates all humanity, has been born and is being born in this world. Alleluia!

Judith Castañeda



The Season of Advent

The season of Advent [Old English, from Latin *adventus* 'arrival', from *advenire*, from *ad-* 'to' + *venire* 'come'] was designated from the first centuries of Christianity as a special season of preparation for the festival of "Navidad" (Spanish) or the Nativity (birth) of Jesus, the Son of God. During this time, the church prepared itself for the annual liturgical celebration of the birth of Jesus, one that had a very marked penitential character. Later, its meaning unfolded to also include the joyful expectation of the Second Coming. The season of Advent was considered to be the first liturgical season of the year, so much so that this season of such singular importance was placed at the beginning of the liturgical calendar.

To mark the passage of the weeks in Advent and to accompany the reflections and prayers, an Advent wreath can be used. This symbol consists of a crown of green foliage. The circular form symbolizes eternal life; the green represents hope and life. Four purple candles, the color of hope and penitence, or red, the color that symbolizes the love of God, are inserted into the foliage. A white candle goes in the center, to symbolize the presence of Jesus. The ritual consists of lighting the corresponding number of candles each week of Advent: one the first week, two the second, etc. On Christmas, after lighting all the other four candles, the white candle is lit. The light and the warmth of the candles represent the nearness of the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World.

This material contains five themes, which are each divided into: Reading of a Psalm, invocation, reading of our reality, biblical readings, reflection, questions to deepen the reflection, activity for the week, final prayer and closing. The themes are the following:

- You are a God who does so much for those who hope in you!
First week of Advent, beginning December 3rd.
- Comfort, speak to the heart and strongly raise your voices!
Second week of Advent, beginning December 10th.
- Germinate like a seed so that your light will make justice spring forth!
Third week of Advent, beginning December 17th.
- A child brings good news. Welcome, little Emmanuel!
Fourth week of Advent, beginning December 24th.
- The son who announces peace and the good news that makes us a family!
Christmas Day, December 25th.

*The light shines
in the darkness,
and the darkness
has not
overcome it..
John 1:5*



*You are a God who does so much
for those who hope in you!*

First week of Advent (beginning December 3rd)
Readings: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19;
I Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Reading from Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Invocation

One voice: Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth!

All voices: Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved!



One voice: Let us light the first candle of the Advent wreath, evoking the light of Jesus, that shines for full salvation and for which we wait with joy.

All voices: God of light, your brightness, shows us the way to take on our reality with courage, always carrying with us the hope of the transforming gospel!

Our reality

There are several conditions that define us as human beings; ranging from the very different places where we live, to the particularities of each community of people, and to daily human life, we are always “waiting.” We live “waiting” for that which can transform the pain and meaninglessness, with which we are confronted in concrete reality: the reality that is presented to us by the communications media, the reading of the reality that others impose on us, and the feeling of impotence that invades us, in the face of a multitude of problems and needs.

We are confronted by our own ambiguities, in the interpretation of what we could be doing in order to transform reality. Little by little, we begin comprehending and engaging in the processes of becoming aware of the reality, processes that are not so immediate, but when we learn to act-while-waiting, there is nothing that can stop us in our path.

Biblical reading: Isaiah 64:1-9; Mark 13:24-37

Reflection

How wonderful it is that we can read and comment on the Bible during these days of “active waiting,” and allow ourselves to be illuminated by the texts of Isaiah 64:1-9, which, in the Biblia del Peregrino version, says: “...From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.” (64,3) The whole chapter is a clamor for the presence and actions of God among God’s people, in order to demonstrate who God is to those who do evil, but also (as v. 4 says), in order to go out to meet those who joyfully practice justice.

Our text from the prophet is found in the final section (chapters 56-66) which talks about the restoration of the exiles and of the land. It is God who makes up the people as the new community

of Zion (54) and will make possible the ethic of the messianic reign, which we find throughout this section of chapters 56 to 66.

This community has a life history that makes them feel that God has hidden God's face from them and has left them abandoned because of their own faults. From this history arises a "waiting/hoping" in a God whom they call Father (v. 7), and this feeling that they are the work of God's hands, utilizing the metaphor of the clay and the potter.

The new Community in Isaiah is defined because it practices justice with joy, it remembers God's paths, it believes that it has been saved, and it recognizes itself as God's people.

Another community that "hopes" is presented to us in the gospel according to Mark 13: 24-27. This Community is described in prophetic language, not as a final judgement, but rather as something partial throughout history, just as the prophets were used to doing. The sentence of God against injustice is highlighted - the injustice of those who have power, in the expression "in those days." The arrival of the Son of Man has the meaning of "Man" (Mankind or Human Being) in his/their fullness, including his/their divine condition, which is equally close to the human condition. The powers that are represented cosmically fall, brought down by the arrival of the Son of Man, who opens the way to equality through following him and by excluding all oppressive power and dominion.

"See," which is equivalent to "know," is key in both passages in order to be able to comprehend the action of "waiting." A new community that has learned to "wait on God," even on the unexpected: how incredible! A new community that learns to practice justice, to retain memory of the ways of God, to follow God and to give testimony to the good news.

Questions to deepen the reflection

- How does our hope in divine justice relate to our purpose?
- What does it mean to be alert, vigilant about our own realities?

Activity for this week

Let's take some time, each day, to meditate on the reality of those who live in conditions of abandonment, exiled from justice. Then, let's reflect: What do they need, what do we need, and what can we contribute concretely so that this condition of abandonment receives a spark of hope during this time?

Final prayer and closing

One voice: God, we give you thanks for this new season of Advent that once again prepares us for the encounter with Jesus' light, so that we can receive and propitiate the full salvation for which your people are crying out.

All voices: Oh God, free us from the darkness of our thoughts and actions! Surprise us with your brightness, so that, moved to coherence between our faith in Jesus Christ and our purpose in accompanying those who suffer the abandonment and rejection of this world.

One voice: In each step, in our daily walk, may the grace of God light our paths.

All voices: Amen.

*Comfort, speak to the heart
and strongly raise your voices!*

Second week of Advent (beginning December 10)
Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13;
2 Peter 3:8-15^a; Mark 1:1-8.

Reading from Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Invocation

One voice: Speak, God, we are listening. Yes, speak of peace for your people and for your faithful servants, because your salvation is near.

All voices: God will indeed give us what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps!



One voice: We continue in the time of Advent, lighting the second candle today - the candle that speaks to us of comfort because a new way is being prepared, a way in the midst of the desert: the way of the Lord.

All voices: Truly, God is very near, to save those who honor him. God's glory will dwell in our land!

Our reality

We have probably become used to hearing, and also saying, that suffering and injustice are our daily bread, and that nothing is left for us but to hope for divine mercy, and to beg that this suffering and injustice doesn't touch those closest to us.

There are also those persons who have become comfortable with these realities of pain, because they are on the side of those who exercise power over the weakest and who biblically justify their positions.

Yet we are also evangelized continually by those who have opened their ears and eyes to hear and see the reality, even when it hurts, and who have raised their voices and their hearts to announce and to denounce. We constantly have motives and reasons for our hopes, as is stated in the first letter to Peter 3:15.

Biblical Reading: Mark 1:1-8; Isaiah 40:1-11

Reflection

The readings from the Gospel according to Mark 1:1-8 and from Isaiah 40:1-11 situate us on God's way, literally! We are accustomed to finding this passage in Isaiah, in the part we know as Deuteroisiah, (Isaiah II), during the ascent of Cyrus in Babylon. Some people have considered the author to be an evangelist, one who brings good news: a poet who developed his ministry among the exiles, and who asked the people to keep "waiting" and to not lose hope in their liberation by the God of history.

Our text begins with an imperative or command to console: “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God: speak to the heart of Jerusalem, proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed...” (v.1-2). In the face of the crisis, this reaffirmation of faith in the God of Israel, who is Creator and Redeemer, is vital. This is why “comforting”/“encouraging” the people is fundamental for maintaining hope and “speak to the heart” or “speak tenderly,” in the Semitic sense, indicates the dynamic human function of deep intention, the intimacy of the heart and of thoughts or reflections. In this sense, it’s appropriate to ask how one can achieve this “speaking” - the precise word of consolation, lived out concretely - in one’s daily life?

Immediately following this imperative to comfort, verses 3-5 evoke a new Exodus. “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God...’” Someone cries out! If we counted the references to the way, we could understand the importance of this way in the desert, in contrast with Mark 1:3, in which the phrase is divided differently: “...a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord’.” Is the way a lifestyle for women and men, and for God? The metaphor of the way appears throughout the Bible; Jesus himself says that He is the way. On the way, we encounter women and men in daily struggle; we find meaning for our searching; we discover one another; we support one another; on the way, we fulfill our hopes.

Questions to deepen the reflection

- What are the ways that we straighten out in order to comfort and to speak to the heart of a hopeless society?
- About what do we need to be comforted?...and...Whom might we comfort or encourage?
- What are the ways of death in our context, and how do we make paths of justice in them?

Activity for this week

Let’s create the conditions for a moment in our families or in our community to show evidence of and also denounce the roads that the markets pave during the end-of-the-year season: roads tinged with pity, but that in reality are pathways of grief and distress. Let’s contrast these roads with the way of the Lord, a way of comfort warmed by our faith and by our sisterhood and brotherhood.

Final prayer and closing

One voice: We give you thanks, God, for this time of communion and consolation through your Word and through the help of the Holy Spirit.

All voices: Guide us to speak, in as many ways as are necessary, to the hearts of those who inhabit the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord! Because God is near and God’s justice goes before him!”

One voice: Mercy and truth meet together; Justice and peace kiss one another. God visits and comforts God’s people!

All voices: Amen.

*Germinate like a seed so that
your light will cause justice
to spring forth*

Third week of Advent (beginning December 17th)
Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126;
Luke 1: 46b -55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24;
John 1:6-8, 19-28.

Reading from Psalm 126

Invocation

One voice: God has done great things for us; we are filled with joy!

All voices: Even from captivity, those who have walked and sewn with tears will return singing with joy, with sheaves of wheat in their arms.



One voice: In this new moment of Advent, let us light the third candle that directs our attention towards joy and happiness, products of work for justice and active hope in Jesus Christ, the grain of wheat that gives fruit for abundant life.

All voices: The nations will also declare that God has done great things for them!

Our reality

There is a phrase that seems to summarize many of today's practices: "The world is full of people who want to harvest fruit from trees that they never planted." Nevertheless, it is also true that there are testimonies of women and men who have not only planted with tears; they have also been the seed that today germinates into historical memory and hope.

Let's return our gaze to the seed, learning from farmer women and men about ancestral indigenous wisdom, that reads the signs of the times and that "knows to wait" for the harvest, even in the midst of very difficult climatic and social conditions.

Biblical reading: Psalm 126; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Reflection

Psalm 126 is considered to be a "Psalm of ascent" (120-134), one of a number of songs of return for the exiled, when they ascended to Jerusalem. It is a "Psalm of pilgrimage," referring to the ascent to Jerusalem for the feast days, and is considered to be a community lamentation. It is believed that it took more than 700 years to compose the Psalm, and thus that it could represent a synthesis of the faith of the Old Testament.

Our text illustrates for us an existential situation with images that are understandable, that of planting/sewing with tears and harvesting with songs of joy (v. 5), images that seem to allude to the first years after the return from Babylon. It is also an expression that could be applied to many

daily or specific actions that also indicate the conviction that we hold and that we can sew; that this planting is collective and at all times, even with pain and tears, because our confidence is that we will harvest with joy and songs.

In the New Testament, we find a variety of existential situations in relation to this time of waiting and hoping, as well as attitudes and actions as distinct forms of hoping. One very specific one is in relation to John the Baptist, according to the gospel of John 1:1-8, 19-28. It is also a time of expectations, a time of waiting/hoping that is expressed very clearly: 1) In that which has existed from the beginning, and in the Word there was Life, and this Life was the light of humanity, and shone in the darkness (vv. 1-5); 2) In the questions about “who are you?” on the part of the religious authorities, the “waiting/hoping” for the Messiah also manifests itself, although even while seeing him, they don’t recognize him. John the Baptist responds, “... among you stands one whom you do not know, who comes after me,...and I am not worthy to...” (vv. 19-28).

Seed, sewer, planter, earth, waiting period, word, light! Of course, there are other elements that help a seed to germinate and bear fruit. Nevertheless, it is so important that light dwelt among us, and light became a seed that bore fruit to abundant life. That time of waiting and hoping caused us to learn and to know who He is and who we all are.

Questions to deepen the reflection

- Comment on an experience of planting that has produced fruits, and talk about the process.
- Share rays of light that we find in the context in which we live. What maintains that hope, that certainty?

Activity for this week

During this week, we can look for a person or a family that has recently suffered a tragic situation. Perhaps they have had to weep in the face of a situation of injustice. Let’s visit them, sharing a gesture of solidarity that could invite them to consider that there is hope in Jesus Christ. To this gesture, we can add a decorated note or poster that includes the message of Psalm 126. And if we are in this situation of injustice, let’s rewrite the Psalm, and place it in a visible location in order to read it regularly.

Final prayer and closing

One voice: We come before you, oh God, with thanksgiving, recognizing that you reach out to accompany those who are struggling through life in the midst of tears and torturous labor. You work great things in the midst of them, until you overwhelm them with joy.

All voices: Renew our understanding in order to learn and take on our true calling in your reign, not only in expectation of the fruits, but in the vocation of being seeds that germinate in favor of life.

One voice: May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all those persons who seek to renew their understanding.

All voices: Amen.

*A child brings good news.
Welcome, little emmanuel!*

Fourth week of Advent (beginning December 24)
Readings: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14;
Luke 2:1-14

Reading from Psalm 96

Invocation

One voice: Sing to God a new song; Sing to God all the earth. Sing to God, bless God's name; proclaim day after day the good news of God's salvation!

All voices: Say among the nations: "The Lord reigns!" The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; God will judge the peoples with equity.



One voice: We light the fourth Advent candle with the wonder still produced in us by the reign of the God who brings us justice and equity through the face and tenderness of a child.

All voices: Yes, God comes to govern the earth, and will govern the peoples of the world with justice and with truth!

Our reality

Children and adolescents are topics on the agenda of many international, national, and regional organizations, due to the vulnerability and lack of protections that they face every day. They are living in experiences of abandonment, sexual abuse, eviction, lack of protection, vulnerability, situations of living on the streets, and various levels of neglect.

A child has brought us good news; he brought us joy for life and reasons to struggle for an abundant life. What can and should we do so that the child of Bethlehem can bring peace and justice today?

Biblical reading: Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-14

Reflection

We have two gospels that include stories of Jesus' infancy: those of Matthew and Luke. There is not much information, even though the Apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus also exists. Yes, the time of waiting has come to an end: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given: and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6). The truth is, these are a lot of adjectives for a child; we are particularly struck by "Counselor" (a child!), and a prince of peace, something that we need so much.

Isaiah also tells us that “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the young woman is pregnant and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14). The Messiah is called ¡Emanuelito! (Little Emmanuel). The peculiarity of this announcement is that it is written within a much broader list of other children (primarily, among others, John the Baptist) in the history of the people of God. Others who would develop a mission or task, which in the case of Emmanuel and, according to Luke, will begin a new time period: the saving time of the reign of God.

Joy is the distinctive feature of this new time, begun by a child. In the Old Testament, joy is already the sign of a community that is happy with God, because the people express thanksgiving. Psalm 96 is a hymn of praise that God celebrates as King, with a new song, and in Luke, fear becomes lasting joy (2:9-11). To this joy about his arrival, we need to add protection, care, love and respect for our children.

Questions to deepen the Reflection

- Share an experience from childhood, in which this joy of being a girl or a boy made a deep impact upon who you are today.
- Express a phrase that summarizes what this child called Little Immanuel means to you. Sometimes we, as adults, have forgotten what this means.

Activity for this week

Make some time for learning; find a girl or boy with whom to share, and converse with him or her about his/her life, games, fears and dreams. Practice empathic listening in order to understand this child’s world and its implications for the hope that is so needed in adulthood.

Final prayer and closing

One voice: Once again we give you thanks for bringing us closer to your reign: Your reign of justice and truth is far from the concept of power in pride and subjugation, but is revealed in the beauty and simplicity of the smallest of humanity.

All voices: Because unto us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

One voice: Because God is great and worthy to be praised forever.

All voices: Amen.

*The son who announces peace
and the good news that makes
us a family!*

Christmas Day (December 25th)
Readings: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98;
Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12); John 1:1-14

Reading from Psalm 98

Invocation

One voice: Sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him!

All voices: God has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.



One voice: We bring Advent to a climax by lighting the final candle that proclaims the presence of Jesus; the true light that illumines all of humanity has been born into this world.

All voices: We celebrate with hope; the unprecedented has happened. The one who is the Word became humanity and lived among us, and today we can see his glory. Alleluia!

Our reality

Frequently, we have heard that peace is not the absence of war. In other words, there are distinct situations where the absence of peace means death for various reasons, because human life and that of creation don't seem to mean very much.

The vulnerability we live in, along with the whole planet, puts us at the forefront of a great need for peace, for messages, communications, actions, attitudes, options and commitments, in order to achieve the radical changes in our ways of living, of thinking, of speaking, and of acting. In this sense, the son of God reminds us on this day we celebrate Christmas, in a symbolic way, that there is a calling to be messengers - messengers of peace - and doers - doers of justice - by means of the grace and the truth of Jesus, as the gospel of John says.

Biblical reading: Isaiah 52:7-10; John 1:1-14

Reflection

In this reflection, let's recover some key concepts in the Isaiah texts, and in the Gospel of John, that will help us to get to the essence of the meaning of Christmas, in a perspective of commitment and joy because of the arrival of the Son of God in our lives.

Isaiah 52:7 emphasizes a strong succession of verbs that unite in a persuasive and moving message for all persons: proclaim peace; bring good news; proclaim victory; say to Zion: "Your God reigns!"

Isaiah highlights the God of Israel who “proclaims” - who is not uncertain about tomorrow, who is the one who makes events happen, who creates. In the same way, God announces the “good news” that also appears in Isaiah 40:9 and 41:27. In our text, the word was translated into the Greek as euangelízesthai, and in the New Testament, it is utilized to form the word “gospel,” to speak about the good news of Jesus. For Isaiah 52:9-10, God is the one who rescues with his holy arm, in the same way that is announced in Psalm 98, a hymn of praise that celebrates God as the author of salvation, and an invitation for the world and nature to praise the King.

John presents a vision about the “son;” from the beginning of the Gospel, Jesus is identified with eternal wisdom. Jesus is the living expression of the Father; Jesus Christ is defined as the “light of life,” life made flesh, Jesus of Nazareth. “Life” is one of the concepts of greater weight in Johannine literature. With this word, the great salvific event is announced - the epiphany of God in Christ. The word is also “true light”; we referred to this concept previously.

A third key concept in John 1:1-13, is the divine tendency for us to become sons and daughters of God. Through this affiliation, in faith, we can fulfill, contribute to, and collaborate with the development of a creative project of God, based in justice and love. V.14 is impactful and definitive: “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” With him the “new community” arrives, the “new creation” - in which we learn to be messengers of peace in a world broken by injustices and the abuse of power; to announce that which is new, in a convulsing world where death installs itself by force; to share life, because it is the purpose of the gospel of the reign of God for us to share and to spend our lives building justice; and to love one another, help one another, unite our strengths as sisters and brothers, because the Savior of the world is dwelling among us.

Questions to deepen the reflection

- What are the key concepts in the reading of Isaiah and of the gospel of John? Does it seem to us that we should review these concepts in the light of the reality of our own contexts?
- What makes us feel like family? What makes us act like a family and recognize ourselves as family?

Activity for this week

Who near us doesn't have a family? In this time, talk about Christmas (among other things) evokes family gatherings in which a traditional meal is shared, but that same talk forgets about the widows, orphans, and foreigners who don't have family. Locate persons who are living in these situations; celebrate Christmas by becoming their family, their new community, in the faith of our savior Jesus Christ.

Final prayer and closing

One voice: We have arrived at the end of this illuminating time of Advent. We have prepared ourselves to encounter our Savior, and thus we thank God for the life God has given to us and to our sisters and brothers who share this encounter.

All voices: God, light our way and accompany our steps, taking and being good news wherever we go! We want to reflect the precious light that comes from you, and for which this world waits so anxiously.

One voice: May God's favor be with each and every one of you, and may the presence of Jesus live in each one of us always.

All voices: Amen.



Game today... Reality tomorrow

A violent toy is one which:

- Teaches girls and boys that war and killing another person is an acceptable way to resolve problems or differences.
- Stimulates the wounding or killing of other persons.
- Idealizes a warlike mentality, combat and war.
- Reinforces sexist stereotypes, in the minds of girls and boys, of domination by men and of passivity by women.
- Presents girls and boys with an image that devalues persons of different racial-ethnic groups.
- Unnecessarily promotes aggressive, violent and competitive conduct in girls and boys.
- Creates, in girls and boys, the need to have enemies.
- Damages, wounds and kills persons and animals.
- Promotes a culture of violence, which acts against the life in abundance promised by Jesus.

**For Christmas, give a creative toy
or gift that encourages and promotes life**

