

# Liturgical Year Supplemental Lesson

## Advent and Christmas

### Correlated Materials

Student Text: Chapter 10, pp. 50–54;  
Chapter 11, pp. 55–59

#### LESSON FOCUS

During the liturgical year we celebrate the life of Christ. Advent and Christmas are two Church seasons that guide us to walk with Jesus so that we can know him better. We have many traditions in our families and parishes that remind us that Advent and Christmas help us to know and love Jesus.

#### AIMS

- Students will be reminded that God’s people waited a long time for the Savior to come; during Advent, we too wait for Jesus’ birth.
- Students will learn that we must prepare our hearts for Jesus’ coming at Christmas.
- Students will be introduced to the Church seasons as a time to walk with Jesus.
- Students will learn about Advent and Christmas customs.

Note: See p. xvi for overall supplemental lesson aims, CCC, and Scripture.

#### Begin the Lesson

### Preparation (10 minutes)

Use one or more of the following resources for prayer and student preparation for the lesson.

**SCRIPTURE:** Student Text, p. 55.

**“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (Matthew 1:23).**

The Blessed Virgin Mary will be the Mother of Jesus, Our Savior. He shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us.

**SACRED ART:** Student Text, pp. 50 and 56.

*The Annunciation and the Birth of Christ.*

Mary became the Mother of God when she said yes to the angel Gabriel. Jesus was born in a manger.

**PRAYER WITH CHILDREN:** Hail Mary, Student Text, p. 175.

### Proclamation (1 minute)

*(Proclaim slowly, then repeat.)*

God’s people waited a long time for the coming of our Savior, Jesus. Advent is a season of waiting for the birth of Jesus.

### Lesson Explanation (35–50 minutes)

*Explain focus points in your own words or use the discussion points and questions.*

#### Focus 1: God’s people waited a long time for Jesus to come.

- *Do you ever use a calendar to mark down special occasions? (Yes.)*
- *How could you keep track of special events in your whole life? (Calendars, journal.)*

## MATERIALS

- Bible
- White board and markers
- Calendar

### Optional:

- Traditional Advent symbols (see Explanation)
- Copies of Advent wreath (see Focus 3 Optional Activities)
- *Jesse Box* diorama, available through Ignatius Press.

## WORDS TO KNOW

**Advent:** The time starting four Sundays before Christmas when we get ready for the birth of Jesus.

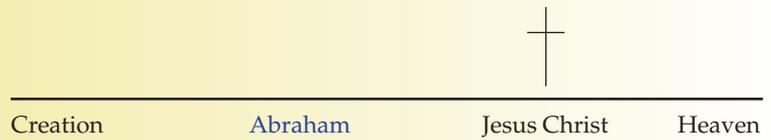
## Advent: A Time of Waiting

Each year the Church has a special time of waiting before Christmas called “Advent” (from the Latin word *advenire* meaning “to come”). As an Advent activity, prepare a classroom manger using pieces of straw. Tell the children that when Advent begins they should try very hard to perform acts of sacrifice, obedience, and love each day. Explain that an act of sacrifice means giving up something they like for the love of Jesus (candy, TV, etc.). Each time they perform an act of sacrifice, obedience, or love, they may place a piece of straw in the manger for baby Jesus. When Christmas day comes, the students’ good deeds will cushion the Savior’s bed.

### FOCUS | OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- Talk to the children about ways they can prepare for Christmas at home during the season of Advent. (See sidebar “Advent: A Time of Waiting”.)

- Today we are going to use a timeline to show some events from Creation to our life in Heaven.
  - **Draw** a simple timeline on the board and discuss:



- **Mark** Creation at the beginning and Heaven at the end.
- **What happened after Adam and Eve disobeyed God?** (They had to leave paradise and the gates of heaven were closed.)
- **Who made it possible for us to enter the gates of Heaven again?** (Jesus Christ.) Place a large cross at the center of the timeline indicating the life of Christ.
- **Write** in Abraham. Tell students that it was 2,000 years after Abraham that the people waited for a Savior to come. Draw an arrow indicating 2,000 years from Abraham to Jesus.
- **Draw** a stick person on the line between Jesus and Heaven. Tell students that they are on their journey to Heaven.
- **Hold up** a calendar and show the four weeks of Advent.
- **Do you feel as if it is a long time from December 1 to December 25?** (Answers will vary.)
- **Mark** a small dot on timeline (after Christ) to indicate one month of us waiting. Compare the dot (one month) to the long line between Abraham and Jesus Christ.
- **What wait was longer, ours during Advent or the wait for all of the people since Abraham?** (All of the people since Abraham.)
- **Do you get impatient waiting for Christmas?** (Yes.)
  - **How do you think it felt for God’s people to wait for thousands of years?** (They must have tired of waiting, but they also learned to trust in God because He always took care of those who loved Him.)
  - **How does Jesus bless us by waiting patiently during Advent?** (By giving us joy and peace on Christmas.)
  - **What can we learn by waiting during Advent?** (Jesus is always worth waiting for.)

**Conclusion:** God’s people waited a long time for Jesus to come. Advent is a time of waiting that brings us joy.

## Focus 2: Advent is the beginning of a new Church year.

- **Using a yearly calendar, point out:**
  - Each “calendar year” begins in January. This year we are in 20XX; we started this new year in January.

- Each “school year” begins in September. This year we are in Grade X. Our school year began in August/September.
- The Church year begins in Advent. (*Four Sundays before Christmas.*) This year Advent began in November/December.
- **What seasons does a year calendar have?** (*Winter, spring, summer, fall.*)
- **The Church year has seasons too. Does anyone know the names of the seasons of the Church?** (*Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time.*)

**Conclusion:** There are many different kinds of calendars during the year; each begins and ends at a different time. Today we are going to look at the Church year (also referred to as the liturgical year). When we celebrate the Church year, we are walking with Jesus in his life.

### **Focus 3: We celebrate Advent using many different customs or traditions.**

- The Church year begins with **Advent**. Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. (Point out the four Sundays/weeks of Advent on the calendar.) This is a time of preparation for the coming of the Savior. The color used at Mass to celebrate Advent is purple.
- God loves us so much that He sent his only beloved Son to live with us here on earth.
  - **How do we respond to God’s love for us, especially during Advent?** (*We go to Mass, pray, and find other ways to love God and others; we do this in order to show God how much we love and appreciate him in return. We have many ways of showing our love to God during Advent and Christmas.*)
- **What customs does your family have to celebrate birthdays, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, etc.?** (*Answers will vary.*)
  - We have many customs or traditions to celebrate Advent and Christmas.
  - **What are some of the customs or traditions your family uses to prepare for the birth of Christ?** (*Answers will vary; lead students to discuss spiritual preparations.*)
- Below are some traditions kept during Advent. Share one or more of these traditions with the students. You may want to provide samples or pictures of each.
  - **Advent wreath**—The Advent wreath is a ring without a beginning or end (like God Who has no beginning and no end.) It is made of evergreen as a sign of eternal life.
    - There are four candles used in this wreath, three purple (to signify penance and preparation) and one pink (to signify the joy that Christmas is closer on the third week).
    - One candle is lit during each week of Advent. You can say prayers when lighting the candles to help prepare for the coming of the Savior at Christmas.

### FOCUS 3 OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Hand out drawings of Advent Wreath. [See Appendix B-30.] Instruct students to color the Advent wreath and candles and to “light” one candle each Sunday of Advent by coloring it yellow. Explain that there are four weeks in Advent; each week begins on a Sunday. Each Sunday of Advent students will color a flame on the candles. Remind students of the meaning of the Advent wreath (see p. 243).
- Talk about Saint Nicholas and December sixth customs. (See sidebars.)
- Read about Little Christmas and the Little Drummer Boy. (See sidebars.)

### Saint Nicholas and Santa Claus

Though one of the most popular saints in the Church, little is known about Saint Nicholas except that he was born in Parara, a city of Lycia in Asia Minor, and that he was the bishop of Myra in the fourth century. His relics are preserved today in the church of San Nicola in Bari, Italy. He is the patron saint of mariners, merchants, bakers, travelers, and children, and his feast day is December 6. Tradition asserts that he became well known during his life for giving generous gifts to many people, including the poor. In the United States he is identified with Santa Claus, the jolly man in a red suit who brings presents to children every Christmas Eve.

- **Manger Scene**—Saint Francis designed the nativity scene to help us meditate upon the coming of the Christ Child. During Advent, we will often put up the scene, but not the baby Jesus, so we can look forward to His coming.
- **Advent Calendar**—There are different types of calendars. With some you open a door, and there is a Bible verse behind them. With others, there are chocolates inside.
- **Jesse tree**—Jesus came from the family tree of Jesse. The Jesse tree uses symbols to trace the family lineage from Jesse up to Jesus. Every Jesse tree is different.
- **Christmas tree**—The Christmas tree is usually an evergreen, a sign of life. It is a symbol of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden and of the Cross. Jesus in the Eucharist is the fruit of the Tree of Life offered up on the Cross. Sometimes people will hang ornaments reminding them of the life of Christ on the tree, as well as a nail to remind them of Jesus’ sacrifice.

**Conclusion:** Advent and Christmas are different Church seasons that help us to walk with Jesus so that we can know Him better. We have many traditions in our families and parishes that remind us that these Church seasons help us to know and love Jesus.

### Review Supplemental Lesson—Liturgical Year: Advent and Christmas (3 minutes)

- We prepare our hearts for Jesus’ birth through prayer.
- The Church celebrates the seasons of Advent and Christmas with many customs and traditions.

### Application (10–20 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following for discussion.

- **What promises can you make to Jesus to prepare your heart for the birth of Christ?** (*Prayer, acts of kindness, obedience to parents and teachers, giving up something.*)
- **Encourage** students to take time each Sunday to add a flame to their Advent wreath and to say a prayer and think about Jesus coming on Christmas day. Discuss when and how they can do this at home so that they can visualize what they will do.
- After waiting during Advent, we celebrate Christmas, the birth of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Gather students around a nativity set and read Luke 2:1–19. (Use the *Jesse Box* nativity diorama, available through Ignatius Press.)

## December Sixth Customs

On December 5 every year, Saint Nicholas passes through towns in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands and leaves coins or other small gifts for the children to discover on the morning of December 6, which is his feast day. In the Netherlands, where Saint Nicholas is called Sinterklaas, there are many songs that children sing to celebrate the generous saint. Here is one of the most popular:

“Sinterklaas kapoentje  
gooi wat in mijn schoentje,  
gooi wat in mijn laarsje  
Dank u, Sinterklaasje”

## Little Christmas

The Feast of the Epiphany is sometimes called “Little Christmas,” for it was on this day that the birth of the Savior was revealed to the entire world, through the Magi, as He had been revealed to the Jewish people, through the shepherds, on Christmas Day.

## The Little Drummer Boy

According to legend, a little drummer boy was present in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. When he saw the magnificent gifts of the Magi, he was saddened because he was poor and had no gift to bring to the Christ Child. As the Magi left, he stood alone, then softly began to play his drum for the holy Baby. Walking forward and playing more loudly, he saw Jesus smile at him. With a heart full of love, he continued to play. No longer sad, the little drummer boy’s heart sang for he knew that his was the greatest gift of all—the gift of love. It is important to remember that Jesus does not want extravagant or expensive gifts, only the best a person has. Using one’s God-given talents for God’s glory will certainly make the Christ Child smile.

## Celebration (5–10 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following.

- Have students look at the birth of Christ and the Holy Family in the artwork on Student Text, p. 56. Pray:  
  
Dear Jesus, Thank You for coming to the world as our Savior. Help me to open my heart to You this Christmas and to remember that Christmas is about Your birth. Help me this week to be like You and to wait patiently for Christmas. Amen.
- Pray the Hail Mary, Student Text, p. 175.
- Quiet students and listen to the refrain of “O Come O Come Emmanuel.” Go to [www.ignatius.com/promotions/adoremus-hymnal/downloadable-mp3s.htm](http://www.ignatius.com/promotions/adoremus-hymnal/downloadable-mp3s.htm) for downloadable MP3s.
- Remind students and parents that December 8 is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (celebrating that the Blessed Mother was free from Original Sin), a Holy Day of Obligation.



## 10 Preparing for Our Savior

“A voice cries:  
‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the  
LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for  
our God.’”

Isaiah 40:3

God wants all of His people to be happy with Him forever. But because of Adam’s sin, everyone lost the chance to go to Heaven. God promised Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior to make up for their sin and all the sins that were ever committed. The Savior would be Jesus Christ, God the Son!

It was a long time before the Savior came. All that time, God spoke to His Chosen People through holy men called **prophets**. Moses was a prophet. There were many others. They told people to stop sinning and to get ready for the coming of the Savior.

At last it was time for the Savior to come. God chose **Mary** to be His Mother. Mary did not have

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Original Sin. God made her that way. Mary’s soul was always full of God’s life. She was beautiful and good. Mary always did what God wanted her to do. She never said no to God and she kept all His Commandments. She loved God very much and everyone else, too. God was very pleased with Mary.

One day God sent the angel **Gabriel** to Mary’s house. He asked her to be the Mother of God’s Son. She was surprised that God had picked her to be the Mother of the Savior, but she was happy, too. “Oh, yes,” Mary said. “Let it be done to me as you say.” Mary wanted to do whatever God asked of her.

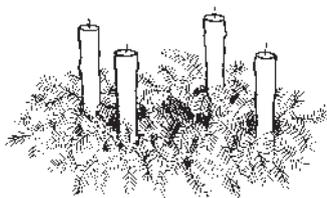
God’s people had to wait and get ready for many years before the Savior came. Each year, before Christmas, we spend time getting ready for Jesus, too. We call this time **Advent**.

One way we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus is by making an Advent wreath. It is a wreath of evergreen branches with four candles—three purple candles and one pink one. Each candle stands for one of the four weeks in which we prepare for Christmas. We have Advent wreaths in our churches and in our homes.

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*“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!”*

*Luke 1:28*



### **Words to Know:**

prophets Mary Gabriel Advent

**Q. 25** *Who is the Mother of Jesus?*

The Mother of Jesus is the Blessed Virgin Mary (CCC 495).

**Q. 26** *Was anyone other than Jesus ever free from Original Sin?*

The Blessed Virgin Mary was free from Original Sin (CCC 490–91).

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### **We Pray:**

#### **HAIL MARY**

Hail Mary, full of grace!  
The Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death. *Amen.*

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## 11 The Savior Is Born

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear  
a son,  
and his name shall be called Emmanuel”  
(which means, God with us).

Matthew 1:23

It was almost time for Mary’s baby to be born when she and Joseph heard some news. The ruler of their land wanted to count all the people who lived there. Everyone had to travel to certain cities to be counted. Mary and Joseph had to go to a city called **Bethlehem**.

When they got to Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph could not find a place to stay. So they had to stay in a stable with the animals. There, the baby Jesus was born. His bed was a **manger** filled with straw. This was part of God’s plan for **Christmas**. He did not want to come to earth as a rich king. He wanted to share the life of the poor.

That is why the first people to learn about the newborn Savior were poor shepherds. An angel came to them as they watched their sheep.

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“I bring you good news,” said the angel. “A Savior has been born to you. You will find Him lying in a manger.” The shepherds hurried to find the newborn Savior. They found the baby Jesus with Mary and Joseph just as the angel had told them.

Far away, three wise men saw a big, bright star moving across the sky. They followed the star to see where it would take them. It led them to Jesus. The wise men gave precious gifts to the Savior, gifts for a king: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They knew that Jesus was a great king, even though He looked like a poor little baby.

A wicked man named Herod ruled over the land where Jesus was born. He met the wise men and heard them talk about a baby who was a king. Herod wanted no one to be king but himself. He was so angry he tried to have Jesus killed. But God warned Joseph to take Jesus and Mary far away so that Herod could not kill Jesus. They went to the land of Egypt, and there they lived until Herod was dead.

*“The angel said to them, ‘Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy . . . for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’ ”*

*Luke 2:10–11*

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### Words to Know:

Bethlehem manger Christmas

- Q. 27** *Where was Jesus born?*  
Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem in a stable, and placed in a manger (CCC 525).
- Q. 28** *When was Jesus born?*  
Jesus was born on the first Christmas Day more than two thousand years ago (CCC 526).
- Q. 29** *Who is Jesus Christ?*  
Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is true God and true man (CCC 470).
- Q. 30** *Why did the Son of God become man?*  
The Son of God became man to save us from our sins (CCC 461).

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Away in a manger, no crib for His bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask You to stay  
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in Your tender care,  
And fit us for Heaven to live with You there.

*Traditional Carol*

