



THE PROMISED WORD



2021 – 2022 Advent to Christmas Reflection Booklet (Year C)



The slogan of the New Evangelisation in the
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore



1 Jesus is depicted by the figure "J"

2 In Jesus we say "Yes"

3 It is "us" who encounter Jesus

4 The colour tone in the word "Jesus" shows a movement from lukewarm (yellow/orange) depicted by "us" to passionate (red) depicted by "Yes"

5 The yellow tone on the 3 strips moving into the red tone shows another movement from lukewarmness to passion after encountering Jesus

6 The 3 strips signify that by our baptism, we are called to be priest, prophet, and king. We share in the 3-fold mission of Jesus Christ.

7 "4" represents the four Tenets of the New Evangelisation: Word, Worship, Communion, and Witness.

Your **OPINION** is **VALUABLE**

Thanks for picking up a copy of this booklet!

As you dive into the pages of this booklet,
we would like to know what worked and
what could be better improved.

Let us know what you think by giving us your valuable feedback.



one.org.sg/feedback

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2021 - 2022 Advent to Christmas

Message



Advent to Christmas Message 2021 - 2022

Dear sisters and brothers,

There have been many different responses to the Covid-19 pandemic with many disagreeing with the solutions that have been taken up by one party or another. We, as Catholics should not be strangers to this kind of situation. Jesus, who was born more than 2000 years ago brought about such a situation. The different values of people brought about different opinions and different actions to one single event.

As we prepare ourselves during this time of Advent for Christmas, we do need to go back to the Word of God. Jesus came for our salvation and He came to show us how to live as a child of our Father. Jesus is the Promised Word. He is the fulfilment of our Father's promise.

During this time of preparation, we invite you to dwell in the richness of the Word of God and be transformed. The Word of God is active and alive. We begin our sessions with the Word of God because it is truly Jesus that we are starting with. We begin each session with Jesus, in the hope that we will not just end with Jesus, but would have walked with Jesus on our pilgrimage of life. Enlightened, nourished and strengthened by the Word, we hope this booklet will enable you to have a deep experience of the love of the Lord this Christmas.

Advent finds meaning only in Christmas and Christmas can only be discovered at its depth when we spend time pondering on the mysteries of the birth of our Lord Jesus through His revealed Word. Let this be a time of removing distractions in order to give glory to our Saviour.

At the incarnation, the Holy Spirit had an important role. Therefore, during this time of preparation, we should invoke the strength and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and hearts so that we are ready to receive Jesus once again at Christmas.

I wish all of you a meaningful and joyous time of preparation with one another.

Rev. Fr. Terence Pereira

Episcopal Vicar for the New Evangelisation

The Purpose of this Booklet

This resource is intended for families, RCIA groups, parish organisations, ministries, small Christian communities and neighbourhood Christian communities. It may also be used for individual reflection.

- To promote the Christian community in the neighbourhood as a place where we can hear the word of God and put it into practice.
- To give participants an experience of community and a sense of their mission by reaching out to neighbours and those in need.
- To gather parish organisations / ministries to pray together as one and put Christ back in the centre.
- To increase communication between family members. Love should be the main message in all communication, so the sessions are aimed at families sharing stories, doing meaningful activities together, sharing faith and being reconciled with one another.

How to Use this Booklet

These reflections may be used either (1) before participating in Sunday's liturgy, as a way of preparation to receive God's Word at Mass, or (2) after participating in the liturgy as a continuation of 'breaking open the Word of God' in our lives.

In the spirit of generosity, group members volunteer beforehand to read Scriptures and other parts of the text.

A different group facilitator can take the responsibility in each session to foster good interaction and to keep time.

Someone should record the discussion in general terms and then email it to the members who are absent.

The duration of each session is about two hours.

The time and place for the next meeting should be announced at the end of each session.

Session Format

Opening Prayer

Everyone will pray the opening prayer and sing an opening hymn to foster a spirit of reflection and openness to God's Word and one another.

Readings

The three scripture texts should be read at least twice, allowing some time for a silent listening to the Word.

Then the passages are explained by the leader or group facilitator using the given write up. Preparation is recommended for the leader or group facilitator to read and understand prior the meeting.

Thoughts

Someone reads this section, which is meant to deepen our reflection(s) on the readings of the week. Allow adequate time for reflection(s).

Reflections

This section is designed with the different groups in mind. Select the section relevant to your group or use the individual section if you are doing it on your own. Reflect on the questions and allow time for response.

Take Home

Discern how the Word of God is inviting us collectively or individually to respond through concrete action(s).

Doing Your Bit

Your action to reach out or evangelise to another person to share the Good News of Jesus.

Closing Prayer

The session ends with a prayer being prayed by everyone in the group. Everyone will pray for each participant and then for the community.

Appendix: Activities

The appendix section contains activities that further enrich our spiritual journey with our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ.

Facilitating Group Reflection

For where two or three meet in my name, I am there with them - Matthew 18:20

Be mindful of Christ's presence. Adopt a humble and reverent manner when speaking or acting within the group. Read the text meditatively and give your best attention to the words of the Scripture readings.

May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you - John 17:21

Help everyone to feel at home and take special care to welcome newcomers. Treat each person as a beloved member of the community and invite one another to participate in the session by taking turns to read the text. Use a language that everyone can understand so that no one feels left out.

...and their great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen - Mark 10:42-43

Avoid being authoritative or domineering by acting aggressively, flaunting knowledge or telling others what to do. If there is advice to be given, do so after the reflection is done. Choose words that are easily understood by all when speaking. Avoid giving lengthy and verbose sharing that consume other people's opportunities to offer their sharing.

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me - Luke 9:23

At the core of these reflections is the Word of God, the teachings of the Church and the invitation for our conversion towards Christ. If the group wanders away from this during the session, gently invite one another to re-focus.

Because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say - Luke 12:12

There is no need to prepare sharing in advance or to appoint people to share. Wait patiently for God's Spirit to inspire generosity and remember to give thanks after someone volunteers to contribute their own faith experience.

...your light must shine in people's sight, so that, on seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven - Matthew 5:16

These reflections challenge us to do the will of God - to reflect the love of Christ to others we meet. Spend some time at the start of the next group session sharing with one another how each one has tried to do this over the past week.



Sundays of Advent (Year C)

THE PROMISED WORD

<i>Week</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Theme</i>
1st Sunday of Advent	Jeremiah 33:14-16 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2 Luke 21:25-28, 34-36	Strengthened by the Word
2nd Sunday of Advent	Baruch 5:1-9 Philippians 1:4-6,8-11 Luke 3:1-6	Jesus, the Word of God
3rd Sunday of Advent	Zephaniah 3:14-18 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:10-18	Transformed by the Word
4th Sunday of Advent	Micah 5:1-4 Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45	The Promised Word Fulfilled



*Advent Reflection
(Year C)*

The Promised Word



1st Sunday of Advent

Strengthened by the Word

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, You have sent Your Son, Jesus to reveal Your love to a world darkened by sin. We thank You and praise You for Your mercy through our Lord Jesus, who is our hope and upon whom we place all our trust to fulfill Your promise of the fullness of life. You bring wisdom and peace into all situations, at all times. We pray this in unity with the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.



Readings:

1st Reading:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Babylon invades Judah, destroys Jerusalem and the People of God are taken into exile. The prophet Nathan had assured King David that his dynasty would last forever, and so Israel still hopes in the promise that the Davidic monarchy would be restored. However, as the people assimilates into the pagan culture of their conquerors, they begin to lose hope. They become lax in their devotion and practices, and Jeremiah fears that the people would lose their Jewish identity. Jeremiah speaks words of encouragement to strengthen a people who seem to have forgotten the promise of the Messiah. This Messiah is to restore the justice of God the Father and usher in a new age of mercy and salvation. Jeremiah's message offers us the metaphor of light and darkness to capture the movement from a place of darkness into the light of new birth for all of us, to be renewed and strengthened in faith during this holy season.

2nd Reading:

1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:3

St. Paul turns his evangelisation efforts towards the Greeks in Thessalonica when the Jews reject him. He fears the Thessalonian Christians will lose their way under persecution and offers words of encouragement to remain steadfast.

Like Jeremiah, he is concerned about a watered-down Christian identity, much like people of Israel who became lax in their faith during Jeremiah's time. He urges them continually to obey the Lord's commandments and teachings and put into practice what they already know. His words of encouragement lend testimony to the strength that comes from the grace of trusting and living in obedience to the Word of God.

Gospel:

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus uses the language of the Old Testament prophets to describe the sort of political and social upheaval that the early Christians would hear about and experience. Jesus emphasised to His disciples of the need to remain vigilant with patient endurance despite facing persecution as they await His return. Jesus comforts and encourages them to look beyond the different types of physical destruction in the world. At the same time, everything that happens, has significance in understanding the presence and activity of God our Father in all creation. The signs would signify to His followers that the reality of their eternal reward is near. They will be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in all situations even though they do not know when the Lord will return.

Thoughts:

Today is the 1st Sunday in Advent, which is the beginning of a new Church year. It is also the beginning of a new cycle of prayers and Scripture readings, Year C. The word 'Advent' means "coming, arrival" in Latin. The three readings today, speaks of the coming of the Lord.

The 1st Reading from the prophet Jeremiah refers prophetically to the coming of Jesus, our King and Saviour (Jer 33:16). This is the coming of baby Jesus in Bethlehem, also known as the First Coming. The Gospel speaks of the end of the world and what we refer to as the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time (Lk 21:27). However, there is still a third coming which forms an important and indispensable link between the First and Second Comings. That is what is spoken about in the 2nd Reading. It is the welcoming of Jesus into our lives in the here and now. This is something which takes place every day. By it, we acknowledge both the First Coming of Jesus in Bethlehem and prepare for the Second Coming at an unknown future date.

Advent prepares us to encounter the reality of the incarnation of Jesus at Christmas and in the ordinary moments of our lives. If our anticipation of the Christ who will come at the end of time were a greater reality, how differently we would respond to the turbulences that rock our faith. We would hasten the fulfilment of His coming in our daily lives. Advent calls forth vigilance and patience.

In our daily life, we are lulled into complacency about our relationship with God our Father in many ways. The things God our Father has given us can become our little gods of comfort. These things can distort our identity as children of God our Father; in the process, we forget the Giver and His promise of true happiness to trust in His plans.

Discouragement finds us when we become impatient with God our Father. Our present appears to demand so much of us that we want quick solutions to problems, complete healing, financial security and so on. Discouragement also distorts our self-understanding and blinds us to see how God our Father is already at work. When discouraged, it is hard to recognise the face of Christ in others, let alone be the face of Christ to others. What might make us forget that God our Father is as He promised: with us, in us and among us? Do we examine ourselves daily and be more aware of what we have compromised?

What else might divert our focus from waiting and watching for the rebirth of Jesus in our lives? And would we allow the stirring He creates to move us into a response when we hear His truth? We can look forward to be strengthened by the Word daily so that we can face the factors which lull us into complacency and not to lose hope in God our Father's saving actions. God-with-us must find expression in our minds, hands, and feet for the Word of God to come alive!

Reflections:

For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

What are the challenges that we are facing as a community that is not enabling us to be patient and distort our view of one another?
Do we turn the Word of God to strengthen us?
Have we become complacent about the relationships in our community?

For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Has the ministry been focused on doing the tasks instead of building relationships with God our Father and one another?
What are we doing in our ministry that encourage us to use the Word of God on our faith journey?

For Family

*Let us as a family share about what stood out in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Does the family read and reflect on the Word of God together?
What needs to be renewed in our hearts as a family this Advent season?
How can the family come together to prepare spiritually for this Christmas?

For Individual

*Spend some time reflecting on the passages of scripture.
If you would share about the scripture text with someone, what would you share?*

When you feel discouraged, alone, abandoned or isolated, do you seek a quick solution by calling someone or meeting up with them, or do you turn to Jesus?
In your “aloneness”, do you see it as a time of waiting and watching for the Lord to reveal himself?

Take Home

Our Father fulfills His promises.

Doing Your Bit

Think of someone who is not well to do (someone who may have lost their job) and a non- Catholic. Once you have identified this person, pray for that person.

1st Sunday of Advent

Strengthened by the Word

Closing Prayer

Prayer of Pope Clement XI:

Lord, I believe in You: increase my faith.

I trust in You: strengthen my trust.

I love You: let me love You more and more.

I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship You as my first beginning.

I long for You as my last end.

I praise You as my constant helper.

And I call You as my loving protector.

I want to do what You ask of me:

In the way You ask, for as long as You ask, because You ask it.

Let me love You Lord as my God.

And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.

A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



My Advent Reflection Journal

2nd Sunday of Advent

Jesus, the Word of God

Opening Prayer

Loving Father in Heaven, we praise You for the wonderful God that You are. We thank You for the promise that You've given to us, the promise of love, the promise that is the Word, Jesus Christ. We thank You for Your everlasting mercy and compassion, and for always calling us back to You. As we ponder on the life that Your Word brings, we ask that You speak to us and inspire us with Your Holy Spirit so that we may open our hearts to listen to You. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Readings:

1st Reading:

Baruch 5:1-9

This chapter is a poetic consolation to Jerusalem while the Israelites were in exile. It is an exhortation for them to lift high their heads and to look forward in anticipation of God our Father's glory for them. The imagery drawn is one of Jerusalem as a mother gathering her lost children, scattered all over in exile, back to where God our Father will reinstate them in His mercy and justice. Reading this in context with chapter 4, it is a reminder that God our Father is compassionate to all who repent and turn back to Him, no matter how far one has turned away from Him. With repentance, one can look forward in hope of restoration of a relationship with God our Father.

2nd Reading:

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

St. Paul speaks with such deep affection and extraordinary exuberance for the Christians in the Philippian church that it is easy to forget he was imprisoned while writing this address. Located in Macedonia, this was the first church that St. Paul established on European soil, whose members were predominantly gentile. The Philippian church was a source of great encouragement for him, having supported his missionary work on several occasions, such as praying for his

release and sending help to supply his needs. More importantly, the cause of his joy is founded upon their commitment to the cause of spreading the gospel. This prompts him to pray that they might abound in the four areas of love, knowledge, wisdom and righteousness so that their witness to Christ Jesus would bring great praise and glory to God our Father.

Gospel:

Luke 3:1-6

The introduction of St. John the Baptist begins with a brief yet encompassing historical context. A modern day reader might find these details tedious and unnecessary. St. Luke, however was intentionally setting the stage to introduce St. John the Baptist as a prophetic figure from God our Father, since that was how prophets in the Old Testament were often revealed. After receiving the divine mandate, St. John the Baptist embraced his mission as the herald of the Good News by calling others to repent and receive God our Father's forgiveness. In quoting Isaiah 40:5 that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God," St. Luke is emphasising that God our Father's promise of redemption found in Christ Jesus is for all of humanity. Indeed, no one, not even the worst of sinners is beyond the reach of God our Father's saving love.

Thoughts:

One of the endings that the Church uses for the dismissal at a Eucharistic celebration is “Go and announce the gospel of the Lord.” These words are deliberately chosen to reflect a more direct and explicit connection between the Mass and our mission as Catholics to evangelise and tell the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world.

What exactly is this Good News that we are told to proclaim? It is the assurance of God the Father’s promise of salvation for all humanity. Our God is a rescuer of the lowly and a restorer of the broken. The saving act of God can be seen in His rescue of lowly Jerusalem. Shamefully “led away by her enemies” (Bar 5:6) and exiled to a foreign land, Jerusalem was reduced to such a sorry state. In the midst of her sorrow and affliction, she receives the hope of a new future. The Lord will save her and rejoice over her.

The Good News that St. John the Baptist proclaims in today’s Gospel, is not salvation from exile, but salvation from our sins. Often, we feel far away from the Lord because we have allowed sin to take hold of our lives. That is why St. John the Baptist calls us to straighten the crooked and smoothen the rough, metaphors of repentance from sin. When we turn away from sin, we can experience the saving love of Jesus Christ in our lives.

As we await for the Second Coming of Christ, how are we to conduct ourselves so that the saving work that has already begun can be brought to completion? In this, St. Paul instructs us to choose the most excellent way of love. That is, to be an example of sincere love of God and of one another. In this way, we become witnesses and bearers of this Good News we are called to announce.

Reflections:

For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

How can we as a community encourage one another to proclaim Jesus, the Word of God to our neighbours?
How have we as a community, witness to the Good News to those around us?

For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

How can the ministry better assist you in responding to the command of: "Go announce the gospel of the Lord"?
Is it the Good News that you proclaim as you do your duty or are you just fulfilling a task?

For Family

*Let us as a family share about what stood out in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Do we reject other members of the family when they speak the Word of God whenever the situation arises?
Does your family treasure Jesus, the Word of God?
How or what does the family talk about concerning Jesus Christ?

For Individual

*Spend some time reflecting on the passages of scripture.
If you would share about the scripture text with someone, what would you share?*

What areas in my life do I need repentance and conversion?
How can I build the four areas of love, knowledge, wisdom, and righteousness as encouraged by St. Paul?

Take Home

Our Father fulfils His promises as He reveals the truth through Jesus Christ.

Doing Your Bit

Think about two or three persons who will be willing to journey with you and ask the Lord to touch their hearts. Then ask them to help that person whom you were thinking of the previous week.

2nd Sunday of Advent

Jesus, the Word of God

Closing Prayer

Gracious Father, we adore You through Jesus Christ, the promised Word, the given hope. We turn to You in anticipation as we journey toward Your coming. May we be reminded of who You are and who You call us to be; beloved children of God the Father. Guide us as we continue in the week, that we may consciously live our lives in righteousness, wisdom, knowledge and love. We make this prayer through Jesus most precious Name. Amen.



My Advent Reflection Journal

3rd Sunday of Advent

Transformed by the Word

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we move deeper into the season of Advent, help us to embrace fully the Word that is Jesus, and rejoice in the hope-filled promises You have made to us in Scripture. We pray that You grant us, our family members and our communities a deeper experience of the joy, exultation, love, thanksgiving, peace and charity that are mentioned in today's Scripture readings. Help us to be transformed by Your Word. Amen.



Readings:

1st Reading:

Zephaniah 3:14-18

The prophet Zephaniah's ministry took place during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC), when many in Israel were faithless and corrupt. It was a time of religious degradation with idolatry taking place. Much of the Book of Zephaniah conveys God our Father's dire warnings of punishment against these people. However, not all is lost. Zephaniah proclaims that God our Father in His mercy will reward a holy remnant of His people who keeps His commandments.

Today's 1st Reading, which concludes the Book of Zephaniah, illustrates this powerfully as the prophet announces God our Father's promises of love, joy and redemption for His people. They will "shout for joy" and "exult" because God our Father has taken away disaster and judgement from them. They have "no further misfortune to hear" as God our Father Himself is their mighty Saviour. God our Father's own happiness over His people is exuberantly portrayed as He rejoices over them "with gladness" and sings "joyfully" because of them.

2nd Reading:

Philippians 4:4-7

St. Paul's letter to the Christians in Philippi was written when he was imprisoned and in danger of death. In his letter, he rejoices at the progress of the gospel in the lives of the Philippians and urges them to grow in Christian joy, kindness and peace, as seen in this short 2nd Reading.

St. Paul certainly looks forward to Christ's Second Coming ("the Lord is near"). In light of this, he urges the Philippians to rejoice and to show kindness to everyone as they continue to be transformed by the Word of God. They are to "have no anxiety at all" but make their requests known to God our Father through prayer and petition. This will then result in them experiencing God our Father's peace that will safeguard their hearts and minds.

Gospel:

Luke 3:10-18

The Gospel shows how God our Father's Promised Word, the expectation that the Messiah has come, stirred up the people as they listened to St. John the Baptist's preaching. Three groups of people – the ordinary crowd, the tax collectors and the soldiers – ask St. John the Baptist what they should do to be ready for the Messiah.

His reply is an anticipation of Jesus' call to charity and justice for His followers. To be ready for God our Father's reign, the people should allow the "good news", as preached by St. John the Baptist, to transform their lives. Those with spare clothing and food should share with those who have none. Tax collectors must stop cheating those they collect taxes from, and soldiers must stop oppressing and extorting from civilians.

When the crowd begins to wonder if St. John the Baptist might be the Messiah, he makes it clear that he is merely preparing the way for the One who is to come. St. John the Baptist knows his place in God our Father's salvific plan and by encouraging the people to act justly according to their stations in life, teaches that each person has a role to play in God our Father's plan.

Thoughts:

The 3rd Sunday of Advent is also called Gaudete ("Rejoice") Sunday with the Scripture readings directing us towards joy and hope. They trace the arc of God our Father's promised Messiah from the Old Testament to the New, developing on what it means to receive God our Father's Promised Word and act on it, with relevant messages for us as modern-day Christians.

The 1st Reading sets the tone. God our Father's Word to His chosen people reveals the blessings they can expect as He is now "in their midst". A foreshadowing of Christ's coming into the world as Emmanuel (God with us), and because He is in their midst, they can now shout for joy and exult.

The sense of joyful expectation of God our Father's blessings in the 1st Reading sets the stage for the 2nd Reading. Here, St. Paul also urges the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord" and "have no anxiety at all" as they allow themselves to be transformed by His Word in preparation for His coming to rule the world.

The Gospel builds on the two earlier readings and explains what it means to have received God our Father's Word and what to expect when Christ comes to establish His kingdom. The crowd, the tax collectors and the soldiers who heard St. John the Baptist preach on repentance, all ask the same question. "What should we do?" His answer -- charity, honesty and justice -- are important Christian virtues expected of us who have received God our Father's Word and want to be transformed by it.

The second half of the Gospel is more sober and reminds us that even as we prepare to celebrate Christmas joyfully, we must still remember that ultimately, we all have to give an account of our lives to God our Father who will judge us at the end of time. Here, St. John the Baptist uses the image of the farmer separating the wheat from the chaff to describe the Last Judgement, in which Christ will come to separate the good from the bad.

Reflections:

For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

How can we prepare for Christmas in a way that shows that God our Father's Word has transformed our lives? What adjustments do we need to make in our community life during this time to show that although Christ's coming is a time of rejoicing, it is also a time of serious reflection on the fruitfulness of our lives?

For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

This is Gaudete Sunday. What does your ministry rejoice in? What sort of joy is present in your ministry members and in your ministry work?

How can we show in our ministry that Christ's coming has made a difference in the way we love and serve others? What changes do we need to make in our ministry to reflect this?

For Family

*Let us as a family share about what stood out in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Gaudete Sunday is a time to rejoice because some progress has been made. What progress has your family made during this time of Advent to grow closer to the Word of God? Have the family members been changed by this time of preparation and if so, how?

For Individual

*Spend some time reflecting on the passages of scripture.
If you would share about the scripture text with someone, what would you share?*

The parts of today's readings that made a deep impression on me are
What is the message that God our Father is telling me through these passages and how I should act on them?

Take Home

Our Father fulfils His promises as He reveals the truth through Jesus Christ so that you can be transformed.

Doing Your Bit

Discuss with the two or three persons as to what you can do to bring Christmas joy to the one whom you have identified.

3rd Sunday of Advent

Transformed by the Word

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, the crowds asked St. John the Baptist, "What should we do?" Help us to realise that preparing for Christmas is more than just preparing for parties and fun. It is a response to Your Promised Word, inviting us to be transformed by the Word. May we be more and more transformed into the image of Jesus, whose coming we look forward to celebrate. Amen.



My Advent Reflection Journal

4th Sunday of Advent

The Promised Word Fulfilled

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, Christmas will soon be upon us. As we look forward to celebrate the sacred moment of the coming of Your Son into our broken world, help us to prepare ourselves for His entry into human history as the Lord of humanity. Help us to look beyond the challenges we face to embrace Your Promised Word fulfilled – the Word Incarnate who wants to transform our lives ever more deeply into a reflection of His love, mercy and grace. Amen.



Readings:

1st Reading:

Micah 5:1-4

The prophet Micah ministered during a time when Assyria was threatening the borders of Israel and Judah, and when corrupt leaders eventually allowed Jerusalem to be invaded and the people dragged into exile. It was also a time of religious confusion as idolatry was rampant.

Nevertheless, Micah prophesises God our Father's word of hope to His people – a new king will emerge from Bethlehem, the town of the historic King David. The new king shall turn things back to good. He will be strong and majestic, bringing peace to His people and allowing them to live in security. Micah also foretells the means of His coming – “when she who is to give birth has borne” – referring to Mother Mary's role in God our Father's salvific plan, a divine promise fulfilled in the New Testament.

2nd Reading:

Hebrews 10:5-10

The Letter to the Hebrews was written for the early Jewish converts to Christianity, who, after embracing the faith, no longer engaged in the religious practices they grew up with. The Letter was written to strengthen them in their new faith and show them that God the Father's covenant with His people is fully and finally completed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

The author of Hebrews gives an interpretation of Jesus' fulfilment of God's Word by depicting Jesus as quoting from Psalm 40. The author's argument goes basically like this: more than sacrifices and sin offerings, what God our Father desires most is obedience and total submission of ourselves. As such, Jesus shows himself as the perfect sacrifice by offering His whole self and surrendering His own will to that of the Father's. By offering His own body, He took upon Himself the sins of people once and for all, thus consecrating God our Father's people to Him.

Gospel:

Luke 1:39-45

St. Luke wrote his gospel to show how God our Father's promises to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus. Today's Gospel clearly shows this when Mother Mary visits her elderly cousin, St. Elizabeth, who is also pregnant. St. Elizabeth, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recognises Mother Mary as “the mother of my Lord”. It is through Mother Mary that God our Father is seen to keep His promise announced through the prophet Micah in the 1st reading.

The Gospel reveals fulfilment of His promised Word as St. Elizabeth proclaims how Mother Mary is triply blessed: Mother Mary is “blessed ... among women”, “blessed is the fruit” of her womb, and Mother Mary is also “blessed” for believing that “what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled”. Even St. John the Baptist appears to recognise the presence of the Lord and the fulfilment of God our Father's promise as he leapt for joy in St. Elizabeth's womb when Mother Mary greeted her.

Thoughts:

The three readings today show us how the promised Saviour is fulfilled across time as well as the deepening of the understanding of God our Father's promise. The prophet Micah prophesied about the coming of a new ruler in Israel. He will ensure that the people of Israel who are suffering under political and religious tribulations, will be able to "dwell securely". This king is described as someone who will be strong and majestic, whose "greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth".

The 2nd Reading makes clear that Jesus, the ruler prophesied by Micah, is not an earthly ruler but one who establishes the reign of God on earth. Instead of a king appearing in triumph to deliver His people politically, He humbles Himself to act in obedience to God our Father's will ("Behold, I come to do your will, O God.") Instead of saving Israel from its political enemies, He redeems His people from their sins by offering His own body as a sacrifice.

This theme of obedience runs through the 2nd Reading and the Gospel. In the Gospel, St. Elizabeth salutes Mother Mary as one "who believed" in obedience that "what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled". The latter two readings develop our understanding of what God our Father's promised Word is about and how it is a prophecy fulfilled that was given by Micah. The Messiah will not come in earthly glory and triumph, but will conquer people's hearts through His humility and obedience to the Father's will, just like Mother Mary, in her humility, said "yes" to God our Father's salvific plan and allowed herself to be chosen to bring Jesus Christ into the world.

The readings show us that God our Father's promise is fulfilled through humility and obedience, as shown by Mother Mary. In cooperating with God our Father's plan of salvation, Mother Mary pointed to the promise being fulfilled in her. Similarly, the more we subordinate our will to the Father and put ourselves at His service, the more God our Father's plans can be realised in full through us. It is something we can reflect on and pray about as we prepare for Christmas.

Reflections:

For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Our Father's promise comes to fruition when we are humble and obedient. Is our community humble and obedient to the Word of God? How is this shown? How do we as a community deepen our understanding of the Word made flesh?

For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

How do we value the virtue of humility in our Christian service? How can we serve the people we minister to in all humility by seeing Jesus Christ in them?

For Family

*Let us as a family share about what stood out in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Humility and obedience are often difficult in a family that takes each other for granted. How have you affirmed the members of your family?

By submitting in obedience to the will of God our Father, you will show more love and understanding to your family members. Is this happening in your family?

For Individual

*Spend some time reflecting on the passages of scripture.
If you would share about the scripture text with someone, what would you share?*

Reflect on the words quoted in the 2nd Reading, "Behold, I come to do your will, O God." How can you become more attuned and sensitive to God our Father's prompting in your life this season? Ask God our Father for His help and grace to discern His will and obey it.

Take Home

Our Father fulfils His promises as He reveals the truth through Jesus Christ so that you can be transformed. Take time to read and reflect on His promises.

Doing Your Bit

Go about your ways to do the things that the three or four of you have decided to do for that person you had identified in the first week.

4th Sunday of Advent

The Promised Word Fulfilled

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, this has been a difficult year as we tried our best to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. Many are finding it a struggle to find joy and hope in their lives. We pray that the celebration of the birth of Your Son will give us the graces and strength we need to bring Your joy and hope to a hurting world. Enable us to trust that You will deliver us from this present difficulty and restore the joy of Your Son's coming into the world into our lives. Amen.



My Advent Reflection Journal

Christmas Reflection
(Year C)

Word Made Flesh





Christmas Reflection (Year C)

WORD MADE FLESH

<i>Week</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Theme</i>
Christmas Nativity of the Lord	Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-6 John 1:1-18	The Eternal Word
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God	Numbers 6:22-27 Galatians 4:4-7 Luke 2:16-21	The Saving Word
Epiphany of the Lord	Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6 Matthew 2:1-12	Illuminated by the Word





we need your feedback

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We would really love to hear from you.

What could have made your experience better? Let us know!



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Christmas - Nativity of the Lord **The Eternal Word**

Opening Prayer

O Heavenly Father, the angels announce and proclaim the birth of Your Son in unison: 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.' Renew in us the hope and joy of salvation that Your Son brought to us. Grant us the courage to pass on this hope and joy to others, so that all may truly rejoice with You and each other at the fullest of time. Amen.



Readings:

1st Reading:

Isaiah 52:7-10

This text is part of the section commonly referred to as 'Second Isaiah' or 'Deutero-Isaiah'. Beginning from chapters 40 to 55, it was written for an audience in exile. Biblical scholars have determined that the author of these chapters was not the actual Isaiah but an unnamed prophet. While taking on the same central idea of the long judgement process of Israel as the original Isaiah, the author of the 'Second Isaiah' shifted gear, gave images of rebuilding, restoring, renewing and re-creating to urge as well as encourage the readers to not give up. Verses 7-10 is a message of great hope to the exilic people not to despair because God the Father will redeem and save Israel.

2nd Reading:

Hebrews 1:1-6

The author of Hebrews opened the book with a confirmation of the unique identity of Jesus Christ: His divine nature, the power and authority conferred on Him. This is shown firstly by stating how in the past God our Father spoke through the prophets but in the final days, God our Father spoke through Jesus His Son, the heir to all things, thus confirming Him as

the first born who has rights to the creation of God our Father. As the Son and heir to the Kingdom, Jesus takes His rightful place on the right hand of God our Father and is far superior to the angels. This is who Jesus Christ is and hence has the power to save and restore all humankind to right relationship.

Gospel:

John 1:1-18

The prologue of John is an introduction of the major themes in this Gospel. One of the key themes is from verse 14 – “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. The Greek word describing this dwelling of the Word means “pitching one’s tent” referencing God dwells in the tent of the Israelites in the Old Testament. This concept of the incarnation - God became man and dwelt among us is what sets Christianity apart from other religions. The notion that the divine power, the light from above became visible through a human being was challenging for the Greeks and the Jews. Yet, this was the divine plan of God our Father, that Jesus Christ by becoming man, is the perfect revelation of God the Father and has come to bring all creation back to the fullness of life in God our Father.

Thoughts:

Christmas is one of the most celebrated holidays around the world by Christians and non-Christians alike. There are many reasons for this. Perhaps, many are attracted to the merry-making, the festivities afforded by the occasion to gather our loved ones around sharing good food and gift-giving. There could be a lot of positive emotions and even memories we associate with Christmas.

When we pause to dig beneath the different reasons for the season, we might discover a deeper longing for connection and goodness embedded at the core of our being. We all wish for a better life. We seek to be our better selves. We long for more fulfilling relationships. However, the reality is that our lives are often challenging and difficult. The temptation may be to become bitter, distressed and cynical in the face of these troubles. Still, we hold on to a hope that life could be more. Even if it is just a fleeting moment of happiness and merry-making, the Christmas celebrations touch a deep longing in all of us to experience goodness and love.

Here is the great opportunity for the Christmas story to be told. The quest for fullness of life has left many empty and wanting. Like the Israelites during the time of the prophet Isaiah, who were trapped in exile waiting for news of deliverance, many today are searching for the way to true freedom and fulfilment.

The story of Christmas is the story of God our Father's response to humanity's deepest longings. By becoming man and dwelling among us, Jesus Christ shows us the path to the life of true happiness and goodness that we were created for, not just on earth but for all eternity. The Apostle John reminds us that, for all who hear and believe in Jesus, He gives them the power to become the children of God. This restoration of our relationship with God the Father unleashes the transforming work of the Spirit in us and creates the life we long for from the inside out. A life of true joy and fulfilment.

This is God our Father's promise to all who believe and follow Jesus, the Eternal Word. This is the Good News of Christmas we must first experience for ourselves, and then tell others about. We are called to be like the angels, to herald Jesus Christ's coming into the hearts of every person. It is a mission entrusted to all the baptised to bring the Eternal Word, the Good News to all in season and out of season. How beautiful indeed are the feet that bring the Good News of freedom, renewal and restoration to an eager audience!

** herald - to be a sign of something important, and often good, is starting to happen, or to make something publicly known, especially by celebrating or praising it. (Cambridge English Dictionary)*

Reflections:

For Small Christian Community

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

How did this community assist you to have a deeper longing for connection and goodness embedded in your being?
How will your celebration of Christmas prepare you for the life of true joy in Jesus Christ?

For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Is the Eternal Word present as we minister to one another and to the parishioners?
What are the effects of constantly heralding the Eternal Word for the ministry?
Do we speak the Eternal Word? Do we act from the Eternal Word?

For Family

*Let us as a family share about what stood out in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Did the family celebrate Christmas with the Eternal Word?

Was the Word of God used at any part of the day?

In what way does the celebration of Christmas make deeper connections with the ones you love in your family?

For Individual

*Spend some time reflecting on the passages of scripture.
If you would share about the scripture text with someone, what would you share?*

Was your best celebration of Christmas on your own or with others?
What did you enjoy most about it?
Was the Word of God part of your joy?
What scripture text did you remember on Christmas day?

Take Home

Our Father fulfils His promises as He reveals the truth through Jesus Christ so that you can be transformed. Take time to read and reflect on His promises for in our hearts the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ is born.

Doing Your Bit

Visit the person on your own or with the other two or three, (if they can make it) and share the joy of Christmas with that person.

Christmas - Nativity of the Lord The Eternal Word

Closing Prayer

(Prayer of Pope St John XXIII)

O Sweet Child of Bethlehem, grant that we may share with all our hearts in this profound mystery of Christmas. Put into the hearts of men and women this peace for which they sometimes seek so desperately and which You alone can give to them. Help them to know one another better, and to live as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father. Reveal to them also Your beauty, holiness and purity. Awaken in their hearts love and gratitude for Your infinite goodness. Join them all together in Your love. And give us Your heavenly peace. Amen.



My Christmas Reflection Journal

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

The Saving Word

Opening Prayer

Loving and gracious Father, we thank You for Your blessings upon us each day. We thank You for sending Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ to bring us to eternal life. We thank You for Mother Mary's faithfulness and obedience to Your word. May we imitate her obedience and humility in accepting Your word and do Your will accordingly. We pray this in Jesus' most Holy name. Amen.



Readings:

1st Reading:

Number 6:22-27

The lectionary begins every year with this ancient priestly blessing reminding all of us that God our Father has indeed blessed us. The blessing from God the Father is significant as it is a sharing in His life and power. This blessing comes with peace and prosperity inviting us to live a full life as how He intended us to live.

2nd Reading:

Galatians 4:4-7

Human history changed at an appointed time set by God our Father with the birth and death of the Messiah. This event marked a shift in God's saving work, from the age of the law to the age of the gospel. By having His Son "born of a woman" and "born under the law", God our Father fulfilled His salvation promise to Abraham and enabled all who believe in Jesus Christ to take on their identity as His adopted children.

Gospel:

Luke 2:16-21

Here is the fullness of time, God our Father sends forth His Son, born of a woman and born under the law to be the saviour of the world with no grandiosity but only humility and austerity. The introduction of His Son was made to the lowly shepherds, who in their simplicity trusted the message from the angels. This amazing news was taken in by Mother Mary who pondered in her heart, letting the divine plan unfold.

Thoughts:

We all desire to be blessed. We pray that God will bless our food, our families and our endeavours. We attribute much of our undeserving gifts to “God’s blessings”. However, when we talk about receiving blessings or being blessed, what does it really mean?

We often associate blessings with having success or receiving good things - good health, successful career, favourable outcomes, financial abundance, loving relationships, a vibrant ministry, a seeming carefree life etc. Indeed, to shower blessings upon someone is to wish all things good for that person.

In the Scriptures however, we see that blessings from God the Father are given with the intent for the receiver to have the fullness of life in Him. To receive divine favour has less to do with material prosperity or positive outcomes, and more to do with experiencing anything that draws us closer to God, *regardless of the circumstances*. This is the reason that blessings in the New Testament is usually connected with poverty, trials and sufferings. These often result in believers benefiting spiritually by being drawn into a deeper life with Jesus. True blessings may not always appear ‘good’ or take the form of something naturally desirable. Faith is needed, trusting that God our Father has our ultimate good in mind, to receive and accept blessings in whatever form it may take.

Looking at the example of Blessed Mary as we honour her today as the “Mother of

God” and regard this singular privilege given to her as a blessing and goodness. Yet, circumstances certainly did not look “good” when Mother Mary was carrying Jesus in her womb. Before St. Joseph married her, it would appear she had a child out of wedlock. Then, the couple had to endure a journey while Mother Mary was still heavily pregnant. When the time has come, they even found themselves without a room to give birth in! This is not a picture we would normally associate with being blessed. Yet, the Angel Gabriel had declared her blessed! Why is that?

It is because through her obedience, faith and humility, our Mother accepted the call of God our Father to bear Jesus the saving Word. To obey the will of God our Father was of greater importance to her than all the struggles and troubles she would have to endure. Instead of complaining, Mother Mary took in all the unfolding trials into her pondering heart.

Mother Mary’s privileged position did not spare her life from suffering even as the incarnation of the saving Word was through her. Sometimes our best blessings come out of our worst situations. Good health, creaturely comforts and wonderful relationships are all things we can be grateful to God for, but they are not His greatest blessings. Our Father’s greatest blessing always rest in Himself. Pain, loss and suffering, may unravel us, but they can also cause us to turn to Jesus and ultimately have transformative value. As believers, we need to recognise the blessings from God our Father as Mother Mary did, and cooperate with His graces in all circumstances so as to receive the fullness of life we were created to live.

Reflections:

For Small Christian Community

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.

Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.

“Sometimes our best blessings come out of our worst situations.” Looking back, can you recall a time when this was true for us as a community?
What are some ways that the community can do to share the blessings received?

For Ministry

We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.

Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.

Does the ministry gather frequently to reflect on the faith and obedience of Mary our Mother?
Does the ministry share on how they have responded to the Saving Word they hear every Sunday?

For Family

Let us as a family share about what stood out in the passages of scripture.

Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.

“Sometimes our best blessings come out of our worst situations.” Looking back, can you recall a time when this was true for us as a family?

How can your family imitate the Holy Family, especially Mother Mary, in being obedient to the Word of God and carry out the will of God our Father especially when it is difficult?

For Individual

Spend some time reflecting on the passages of scripture.

If you would share about the scripture text with someone, what would you share?

Jesus Christ is the Saving Word. How can I live this truth in my life?
What can I do to live my relationship with the Saving Word in a visible manner that is attractive to others?

Take Home

Jesus Christ, the only Saving Word, brings life.

Doing Your Bit

Have a gathering with the two or three persons who had helped you and talk about your experience of sharing Christmas joy.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

The Saving Word

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, open our eyes to recognise Your blessings and be obedient and faithful like Mother Mary. She expressed her faith in accepting to be the mother of Jesus, Your Son and was faithful at the manger in Bethlehem, she was faithful on the flight to Egypt, and she was faithful at the foot of the cross. Empower us to follow her example and be faithful to You in all aspect of our lives especially when it is difficult to do Your will. Embolden us to be like Mother Mary and respond 'YES' to what You asks of us. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit. Amen.



My Christmas Reflection Journal

Epiphany of the Lord **Illuminated by the Word**

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, eternal King, we exalt You and pay homage to You. In Your compassion and love, You sent Your only Son into this world to light our way and to bring us to Your Truth. We are thankful to be counted as Your sons and daughters and to be called into Your union as one Church. We pray that we will be able to be the carrier of Your Word to all whom we encounter to illuminate their lives and draw them closer to You. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Readings:

1st Reading:

Isaiah 60:1-6

The later chapters of Isaiah were written during the restoration period, the time of return from the Babylonian exile in the 5th century B.C. At that time, the excitement of returning from exile was waning and many of them were living subjected to the different foreign powers. The text in this first portion of chapter 60 is one of optimism and hope. The poetic hymn uplifts the spirits of its intended readers by proclaiming that in the darkness of the world, the glory of God will shine upon them. The entire poem (verses 1-22) begins and ends with the imagery of a radiant light across the nation. The final verses of this reading (verses 5-6) symbolise how this radiance attracts homage from the larger foreign powers, drawing parallel to that of the birth of Jesus drawing homage from the magi afar.

2nd Reading:

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

In this reading, St. Paul gives an account of himself being appointed by God our Father as the apostle for the Gentiles. He writes about a “mystery of Christ” (verse 3) that has been revealed to him and other apostles, and how they have a deeper understanding of God our Father’s plan of salvation than the prophets from of old. This mystery refers to the divine plan of salvation through Christ Jesus for both the gentiles and the Jews. This was not something that was easily accepted by the Jews. St. Paul’s preaching about the

Gentiles being equal sharers of God our Father’s promises and blessings (verse 6) led him to be persecuted by the Jews. St. Paul wrote for the purpose of the mission of the Church into the world rather than a self-preservation of herself. He saw himself as commissioned and appointed to bring the Good News and the truth of salvation to all peoples and nations to unite them as one Church and one Faith in Jesus Christ.

Gospel:

Matthew 2:1-12

In the Gospel narrative of today – the feast of the Epiphany, the Magi who were astrologers, played prominent roles as advisors to the king in many eastern states, recognise the promised King of the Jews. Using esoteric insights, the Magi interpreted the rising star as a signal that a royal birth had taken place in Palestine, which prompted a “state visit” to pay homage. In sharp contrast to these well-intentioned foreigners was the unscrupulous jealousy of Herod, who was the reigning King. Herod encouraged the Magi to search for the Christ-child so that he too could worship but it was all a ruse. St. Matthew’s account of the Epiphany foreshadows how Jesus will be later rejected by His own people during His ministry, yet His message will be welcomed by Gentiles all over the world. The Magi’s desire to journey and encounter the infant Jesus shows that the gospel is for everyone. All of humanity, not just the Jews, are invited to discover Christ, to bring Him worship and to take Him as king. It reiterates that the salvation offered by Jesus is for all peoples.

Thoughts:

The Church has long observed the Feast of Epiphany. From the Greek word *epiphanies* which means “appearance” or “manifestation”, Epiphany celebrates the appearance of the Son of God as one of us - both fully divine and fully human. A recurring imagery in all the readings is the radiant light. Like the star appearing in the night sky, Christ is the light that illuminates the darkness of the world.

Let us consider the concept of light and darkness. We know that darkness is really the absence of light. Therefore, even the smallest spark of light can overcome darkness. In the same way, the appearance of Jesus, as the Word made flesh, ignites the hope that banishes the darkness of the world. As the Magi were overjoyed when they saw the star that led them to the child Jesus, this same Jesus would later promise that those who believe in Him would live in everlasting light and joy.

It is no coincidence then, that St. Paul on the road to Damascus experienced a blinding light at the moment of his own conversion. His encounter with the resurrected Jesus ignited a torch within

him that would eventually light up the gentile world with the gospel. This same divine light we see in the story of Epiphany continues to shine throughout the world wherever and whenever the gospel is preached and lived with joy. Pope Francis reminds us that the Christian’s identity card is the joy of the gospel. The heartfelt joy that emits from a true Christian comes from knowing that we have been chosen and saved by Jesus. It is this joy that makes the filament of the gospel incandescent. It is this joy that continue to draw unbelievers to Christ.

Now in this season of Christmas, we are called to give this light to those who are searching, dismayed or struggling to find hope and peace. The Word made flesh in our lives is not just for us to keep and celebrate among ourselves! The Word of God brings the message of hope into our lives through the birth of Christ Jesus and ignites joy in our hearts. This joy-filled and joy-filling message is to be passed on to all peoples. In the same way, we must be like St. Paul, the bringer of light to the gentiles, and carry that light to illuminate the lives of others with the Word of God.

Reflections:

For Small Christian Communities

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Has the Word of God illuminated the life of the community? If so, how?
Is there a need to illuminate the life of others through the Word of God?

For Ministry

*We talk about what struck us in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

In our ministry, is joy a characteristic of the work that we do and the way we relate to each other?
In what ways can we as a ministry shine brighter with the joy of Christ for others?

For Family

*Let us as a family share about what stood out in the passages of scripture.
Let us share a bit about the scripture that we have just heard.*

Christmas does not end until the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated. How will your family continue to celebrate the Light of the world?

Into what areas of your family life will you bring the Light of Christ?

Joy is one of the significant elements of Christmas. How will your family bring Christmas joy to those who are around you?

For Individual

*Spend some time reflecting on the passages of scripture.
If you would share about the scripture text with someone, what would you share?*

How illuminated are you by the Word of God?
Does it bring joy to your life?
Do you share this joy with others?

Take Home

Jesus Christ, the only Saving Word that brings life, illuminates our lives with joy and illuminate the lives of others.

Doing Your Bit

Invite that person whom you had planned to give Christmas joy, to your community (if you have one) or invite that person to have dinner with you.

Epiphany of the Lord **Illuminated by the Word**

Closing Prayer

Loving Father, Jesus Christ, the light of the world, came into this world of darkness and sin and shone radiantly so that we may be drawn to the beauty of Your love. We thank You for Jesus taking on the humble form of man and for leading us every moment into a closer relationship with You, Father. May we continue to see Your joy in the darkest of times and allow that spark of hope to strengthen and guide us. We praise You and we love You. Amen.



My Christmas Reflection Journal



what could we have done better?

Thanks for using this booklet!

We hope that the reflections have helped you and your community to grow in faith.

Did this booklet meet your expectations?

What else would you like to see in future booklets?

Your feedback is important to us. Let us know!



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Appendix - Activities

Advent / Christmas Activities

During Advent, Jesus' coming is emphasised:

- 1) His coming in the past - at Bethlehem, the first Christmas;
- 2) His coming in the present – in the Mass and Sacraments; and in grace as we go about our prayers and work during the day. He comes to us in our neighbours, who are the instruments of His will for us and He comes to our neighbours through us, when we live God our Father's life and make Christ present to those we meet; and
- 3) His coming in the future - the Parousia.

This year, Advent may be celebrated differently from your past years due to the challenges of COVID-19 which has brought the whole humanity to different ways of socializing and working. As a family, community or ministry, think of how you can make this season of waiting in a new way and still make ready for the glory that is promised.

The “O Antiphons” of Advent

The “O Antiphons” refer to the seven antiphons which are prayers that come from the Breviary's Vespers during the Octave before Christmas Eve. They are magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as fulfilment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative ‘Come!’ signify the anticipation of the long awaited Divine Messiah.

Each Antiphon begins with "O" and addresses Jesus with a unique title, which comes from the prophecies of Isaiah:

- **December 17:** O Sapientia
(*O Wisdom*) Isaiah 11:2-3
- **December 18:** O Adonai
(*O Lord*) Isaiah 11:4-5
- **December 19:** O Radix Jesse
(*O Root Of Jesse*) Isaiah 11:1
- **December 20:** O Clavis David
(*O Key of David*) Isaiah 22:22
- **December 21:** O Oriens
(*O Dayspring*) Isaiah 9:2
- **December 22:** O Rex Gentium
(*O King of the nations*) Isaiah 9:7
- **December 23:** O Emmanuel
(*O With Us is God*) Isaiah 7:14

To pray the O Antiphons as they are prayed in the Divine Office, begin with the Antiphon, then pray the Magnificat, and then repeat the Antiphon.

December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
Come to teach us the path of
knowledge!

December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel, giver of
the Law to Moses on Sinai:
Come to rescue us with your mighty
power!

December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem, sign of God's love
for all his people:
Come to save us without delay!

December 20

O Key of David, opening the gates of
God's eternal Kingdom:
Come and free the prisoners of
darkness!

December 21

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal
light, sun of justice:
Come and shine on those who dwell in
darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 22

O King of all nations and keystone of
the Church:
Come and save man, whom you formed
from the dust!

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of
Law:
Come to save us, Lord our God!

An Advent/Christmas Family Project – Building a Family Christmas Crib

Adapted from catholicculture.org

The special devotion to the Christmas crib (also called the crèche or the Nativity scene) finds its origin in the early centuries but gained its popularity when St Francis of Assisi constructed the first crib with the help of his friend, Giovanni Velita, in Greccio, Italy in the year 1223. He celebrated the Nativity of the Lord with such great reverence and simplicity that many were moved to new joy, new enthusiasm and greater devotion.

This Advent, instead of just rushing to put up the manger and Nativity pieces, add the feeling of a journey to this tradition by building the Nativity scene slowly so that as a family, we truly anticipate what it means to wait for the coming of our Lord.

We can do so by constructing the Nativity scene piece by piece each day. With the placement of a piece, a guided prayer or intention can be said with the lighting of candles (perhaps at mealtime, or during evening prayers). The penances of Advent - certain self-

denials, extra tasks, good works, alms, and prayers - not only serve to purify us and strengthen our will, but are a part of the offering of self which we make to Christ at His great Christmas Mass, the celebration of His birthday.

As a family, decides what will be a suitable time for everyone to be available and fix this time to pray together every day from 28 November to 25 December.

Materials Needed:

- Nativity set - figures of Mary, Joseph, the crib, the shepherds, magi, angel, donkey, ox, camel, sheep, stones, hay, foundation of stable, walls of stable, roof of stable, star, etc. (If you do not have a Nativity set already, it can be made using paper, felt or wooden blocks etc. You can download free patterns and images for nativity sets online)
- Advent wreath with 3 purple candles, 1 pink candle and 1 white or gold candle in the middle.

First Week of Advent

SUNDAY 28TH NOVEMBER

Darken the room – but leave a lamp or the light in a nearby room on so you can still read. Gather around the Advent Wreath.

Leader:

The circle of the Advent wreath, without a beginning or an end, symbolizes God our Father's unending love for us. The evergreen in the wreath represents growth and hope for eternal life. The four candles stand for the four weeks before Christmas, as well as the thousands of years people waited for the coming of the Messiah. The white/gold candle represents Jesus, the light of the world.

As we light the candle today, let us turn our thoughts to prepare for Jesus. We can do this through prayer. Prayer is like a window through which the light of God our Father shines through. Let us this week, continue in HOPE and prayer to keep this window open.

Light the first purple candle. Choose to reflect on one of the readings for the day - Jer 33:14-16, 1 The 3:12-4:2, Luk 21:25-28, 34-36. You may wish to focus on what the priest preached in his homily today and discuss what struck you or how has the message challenged you.

Leader: The Lord brings the light of hope to His people; a light that no darkness of suffering, worry or fear can extinguish.

All: Let us walk in the light of hope.

MONDAY 29TH NOVEMBER

THE STONES: PRAYER

Leader:

St. John Chrysostom said, "It is possible to offer fervent prayer even while walking in public or strolling alone, or seated in your shop,...while buying or selling,... or even while cooking."

Today, we will bring together the materials for the stable. The stones shall be the prayers and intentions we collect on behalf of our family members as well as our friends and neighbours. What do we desire for the Kingdom God? (Pause to reflect.)

Distribute the stones among the family members. As each person lays a stone around the manger, offer a prayer for one another, for friends, neighbours and for Jesus. Some examples are:

Lord Jesus, Your kingdom come!

Jesus, who loves us with an everlasting love, let me love You and make You loved.

Jesus, Our Saviour, burning with love for us, set our hearts on fire with love of You.

After laying the stones, end with:

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

TUESDAY 30TH NOVEMBER

THE FOUNDATION: PATIENCE

Leader:

Today, we will lay the foundation of our little stable by practicing the virtue of patience. How have we been impatient? How can we be more patient with ourselves and others? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to practise the virtue of patience. Help us not complain about anyone or anything. Grant that others should not see any impatience on our faces, or hear it in our words and voices. May we be tolerant and accepting of any difficulties and mistakes that we or others may make. We ask this in your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to lay the foundation of the stable. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of patience.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

WEDNESDAY 1ST DECEMBER

THE WALLS: FRIENDLINESS

Leader:

Today, we will erect the walls of our little stable by practicing the virtue of friendliness. In what ways did we fail to offer friendship to others? What can we do to be more welcoming? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to show great warmth and care towards others. Help us to seek out those who are lonely and reach out to those who need our friendship. May we tear down the walls of our hearts that prevents us from caring for others. We ask this in your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to construct the walls of the stable. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of friendliness by welcoming someone new in their workplace, schools, parish or neighbourhood or offering friendship to someone who is feeling lonely.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

First Week of Advent

THURSDAY 2ND DECEMBER THE ROOF: TRUSTWORTHINESS

Leader:

Today, we will build the roof of the stable by practicing the virtue of trustworthiness. Do we let our yes be yes and our no be no (cf. James 5:12) or do we find ourselves going back on our word? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, help us to keep our word for You, Jesus. Help us to be reliable in keeping our promises even when it is tough to do so. Help us to be faithful to Your teachings, Lord, so that we can be credible witnesses for You. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus, as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to construct the roof of the stable. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of trustworthiness.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

FRIDAY 3RD DECEMBER THE GREEN BRANCHES: HOPE

Leader:

Today, we make some green branches and thank God for the gift of hope. Do we wholly depend on God's power and mercy or only our own? (Pause to reflect)

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, help us to build a loving relationship with You and learn to wholly depend on You as the end of hoping is a good that we share with another. Help us to bring hope to others especially during their times of darkness so that they will experience Your love. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to paste the green branches on the stable wall. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of hope to the world.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

SATURDAY 4TH DECEMBER

As a family, make an act of kindness. E.g. offer to help an older neighbour with an odd job, visit the grandparents or make a food hamper for a needy family. Gather to pray and reflect on what you did for your neighbor.

Leader: Dear Jesus, this week has been filled with hope, knowing that You Lord are always ready to forgive us even though we don't deserve it. We offer to You our hearts as we pray:
That we may be more committed to our daily prayers.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord Jesus.

Leader: That we be more thoughtful of our parents and family.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord Jesus.

Leader: That we may help others know You better.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord Jesus.

Second Week of Advent

SUNDAY 5TH DECEMBER

Leader:

The theme for the second week is PEACE. As we light the first candle, we think about how the Lord brings the light of hope to His people; a light that no darkness of suffering, worry or fear can extinguish. (*Light the first purple candle.*)

The Lord brings the light of peace to His people; a light that no darkness of violence or trouble can extinguish. (*Light the second purple candle.*)

This week we choose to be a peacemaker in our families by responding kindly and generously when we are asked to do a chore, an errand or something extra. Peace in the world begins with peace in our hearts. Let us think about a way that we will be peacemakers.

Choose to reflect on one of the readings for the day - Bar 5:1-9, Phil 1:4-6, 8-11, Luk 3:1-6. You may wish to focus on what the priest preached in his homily today and discuss what struck you or how has the message challenged you.

Leader: The Lord brings the light of hope and peace to His people.

All: Let us walk in the light of hope and peace.

MONDAY 6TH DECEMBER

THE HAY: GENTLENESS

Leader:

Today, we will prepare a soft little bed of Hay for Baby Jesus by practicing this beautiful virtue of gentleness. Who do we need to be more gentle and kind to in our lives? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Help us, dear Lord, to speak very gently to others for a 'gentle tongue is a tree of life' (Prov 15:4). Lord, Jesus, You are gentle and humble in heart, may we be gentle in spirit even to those who are unkind to us. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to fill the stable with hay. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of gentleness and teach the children to be life-giving by speaking gently to one another.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

TUESDAY 7TH DECEMBER

THE CRIB: FAITH

Leader:

Today, as we build the little Crib, we thank God our Father for His gift of faith. Unlike other virtues which can be practiced, faith is one of the three theological virtues (the others being hope and charity) and is given by God our Father to us through grace.

Although faith is a gift, we can open ourselves to this gift of faith and strengthen our faith by practicing other virtues. How have we been practicing the virtues so far? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, thank You for always being faithful to us. Thank You for Your great love, and for becoming man for us. We thank You for Your gift of faith. May we live by faith. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to build the crib. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of faith and reflect on the great love of God our Father.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

WEDNESDAY 8TH DECEMBER

THE DONKEY: HUMILITY

Leader:

As we add the donkey to the Nativity scene, let us remember to practise the virtue of humility. In what areas may we need to exercise greater humility? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to be thoughtful of the needs of others and to be willing to be of service. When we achieve great things, may humility remind us to be thankful instead of boastful. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the donkey to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of humility and perform one humble task.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

Second Week of Advent

THURSDAY 9TH DECEMBER

THE OX: DILIGENCE

Leader:

Today as we add the ox to the crèche, we think about the virtue of diligence. Do we do our best in the tasks entrusted to us? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to be diligent in our work, always doing our best in the big or small tasks given to us. May we also persevere to complete the tasks and not give up too easily when the going gets tough. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the ox to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of diligence.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

FRIDAY 10TH DECEMBER

THE SHEEP: RESPECT

Leader:

Today, as we add the sheep to the Nativity scene, let us practise the virtue of respect. Let us take a moment to consider who we need to show greater respect to and how. (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

'To do Your will is my delight; my God, Your law is in my heart!' (Psalm 40:9)
Lord, regardless of how we perceive other people to be, may we always remember that they are Your creations, and it is Your will for us to show respect to everyone. Help us to show respect by honouring the rules of our family, the rules in school or at our place of work and the laws of our nation. May we show respect by always treating others with dignity. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the sheep to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of respect.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

SATURDAY 11TH DECEMBER

As a family, attend the penitential service in your parish. Pray for each person who has sent you a Christmas card. Make and send out Christmas cards – include in the Christmas cards your prayers for the recipients.

Leader: As we reflect on the past week, we think of how we have been peacemakers.
(Pause and invite family members to share how they had been peacemakers or their experiences as they practised the virtues for the week.)
And so we ask: For the times we fail to listen to each other.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For the times we take each other for granted.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: For the times we fail to reach out to each other with love.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Merciful Lord, thank You for Your peace. May our lives be a witness of the loving presence of Jesus.

Third Week of Advent

SUNDAY 12TH DECEMBER

Leader:

The theme this week is JOY. The time for the arrival of Jesus is almost here, we are joyful! We hear the glad sounds around us of people preparing for the coming of Jesus. Through prayers, help us keep this feeling of joy all year long. This week, let us be happy with the simple things that do not cost money. Help us Lord Jesus to be joyful.

Leader: The Lord brings the light of hope to His people; a light that no darkness of suffering, worry or fear can extinguish. (*Light the first purple candle.*)

The Lord brings the light of peace to His people; a light that no darkness of violence or trouble can extinguish. (*Light the second purple candle.*)

The Lord brings the light of joy to His people; a light no darkness of prejudice or unhappiness can extinguish. (*Light the pink candle.*)

Choose to reflect on one of the readings for the day - Zep 3:14-18, Phi 4:4-7, Luk 3:10-18. You may wish to focus on what the priest preached in his homily today and discuss what struck you or how has the message challenged you.

Leader: The Lord brings the light of hope, peace and joy to His people.

All: Let us walk in the light of hope, peace and joy.

MONDAY 13TH DECEMBER

THE CAMEL: HONESTY

Leader:

Today, we add the camel, let us practise the virtue of honesty which is being truthful and sincere. How may we have been dishonest in any way? What do we need to do to be more honest? (Pause to reflect)

Let us pray:

Lord, help us today be accepting of ourselves and not resort to cheating or lies just to appear to be better. O Holy Spirit, immerse us in Your truth, so as to make us effective witnesses of that truth within our families, among our friends, and to all the world. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the camel to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of honesty.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

TUESDAY 14TH DECEMBER

THE SHEPHERDS: PRAYER

Leader:

Today, as we add the shepherds to the Nativity, we remember to pray for our shepherds. (Pause to reflect)

Let us pray:

Lord, today we ask that You strengthen especially Pope Francis, our Archbishop William Goh and all our priests who shepherd Your flock. We pray that they may be examples of Your Truth and that they will guide us always on the path to You. Give them, Lord, the grace of joy and perseverance in their holy vocation. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the shepherds to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to pray for our Pope, our Archbishop and our priests.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

WEDNESDAY 15TH DECEMBER

THE HOLY ANGEL: ADORATION

Leader:

Today, like the Holy Angel that we will add to the Nativity scene, let us adore Jesus. Let us take a moment to consider how we adore Jesus daily. (Pause to reflect)

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, help us to have a special regard for You. May we find ways to show our love for You. Help us to be watchful and faithful for opportunities to share our love with others. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the Holy Angel to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to show our adoration for Jesus in a concrete way e.g. offer a little sacrifice, an extra prayer, an act of some virtue as an acknowledgement of our love for Him.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

Third Week of Advent

THURSDAY 16TH DECEMBER

WISE MEN: PERSEVERANCE

Leader:

Today, as we add the three wise men, let us practise the virtue of perseverance just as they persevered in their search for Jesus. What areas of our lives do we need to persevere in? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, may we accept the graces which lead to perseverance because of our love for You. Help us to be steadfast and persistent in our daily prayers and our good deeds. Today, we pray especially for all who struggle with the challenges in their lives. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the wise men to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of perseverance.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

FRIDAY 17TH DECEMBER

ST. JOSEPH: PRUDENCE

Leader:

Today, as we add St. Joseph to the Nativity scene, let us practise the virtue of prudence. Do we act wisely by choosing the right paths? Have we taken care to avoid any evil? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord, grant us the correct knowledge about things that ought to be done and things that should be avoided. May we exercise prudence by avoiding evil and fleeing from temptations. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add Joseph to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of prudence.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

SATURDAY 18TH DECEMBER

Bake cookies as a family and bringing a batch of cookies when visiting a neighbour or elderly couple who live alone. Reflect together on the Beatitudes.

Leader:

Lord, in this week of Advent, we learnt there are many joys to have just by looking around us. We had the chance to say 'yes' to God our Father through our families and friends. Jesus. Let the light of Your birth always be the dawn enlightening our darkness, giving others joy. Amen.

Fourth Week of Advent

SUNDAY 19TH DECEMBER

Leader:

The theme of the fourth week of Advent is LOVE. Real love is a process of giving—not the giving of material things, but the giving of qualities - such as patience, kindness, compassion, understanding, mercy, forbearance, and forgiveness - qualities whose ultimate purpose is the salvation of our souls. This week, let us strive for eternal happiness in heaven with Jesus. Jesus showed us that love requires personal sacrifice on our part - whether it is by martyrdom, monetary sacrifice, time sacrifice, prayer sacrifice or the sacrifice of just being there for someone when we would rather be elsewhere.

Leader:

The Lord brings the light of hope to His people; a light that no darkness of suffering, worry or fear can extinguish.
(Light the first purple candle.)

The Lord brings the light of peace to His people; a light that no darkness of violence or trouble can extinguish.
(Light the second purple candle.)

The Lord brings the light of joy to His people; a light no darkness of prejudice or unhappiness can extinguish. *(Light the pink candle.)*

The Lord brings the light of love to His people; a light that no darkness of hatred and resentment can extinguish.
(Light the fourth candle.)

Choose to reflect on one of the readings for the day - Mic 5:1-4, Heb 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45. You may wish to focus on what the priest preached in his homily today and discuss what struck you or how has the message challenged you.

Leader: The Lord brings the light of hope, peace, joy and love to His people.

All: Let us walk in the light of hope, peace, joy and love.

MONDAY 20TH DECEMBER
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY:
OBEDIENCE

Leader:

Today, as we add Mother Mary to the Nativity scene, let us practise the virtue of obedience. How do we know what God our Father wants for us? What do you think He might be calling you to obey right now? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord, help us try to please You with our obedience of faith (Rom 1:5). May we do nothing without Your permission. O Wisdom of all eternity, come and teach us Your ways. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add Mother Mary to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of obedience.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
 Come, O Lord.

TUESDAY 21ST DECEMBER
STAR: COURAGE

Leader:

As we add the star to the Nativity scene, let us think about the virtue of courage. Let us look at ourselves - do we do the right thing even in the midst of hardship? Do our actions and words reveal to others the love of Jesus? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, help us to always choose to do the right thing even if it is difficult. O Rising Dawn, come and help us to turn toward Your light. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the star to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of courage.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
 Come, O Lord.

Fourth Week of Advent

WEDNESDAY 22ND DECEMBER

GIFTS: COMMITMENT

Leader:

Today, as we add the Gifts to the Nativity scene, let us consider the virtue of commitment. Let us consider deeply our relationship with God our Father. What gifts do we bring to our King? Can we give our all to Him? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, thank You for all the gifts we have received in our lives. Help us to be mindful of how we can be gifts to others. O King of all nations, come that we may live in peace with one another. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the Gifts to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of commitment.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

THURSDAY 23RD DECEMBER

INNKEEPER: GENEROSITY

Leader:

Although the innkeeper is rarely in the Nativity scene, we add him here today to remember how we are called to be generous. How can we be thoughtful of the needs of others? How can we give fully without holding back? (Pause to reflect.)

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, You gave Yourself freely, fully and totally to us by sharing in our humanity so that we can share in Your divinity. May we learn to give without counting the cost to others. We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

Invite members of the family to add the innkeeper to the Nativity scene. Encourage everyone to practise the virtue of generosity.

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

FRIDAY 24TH DECEMBER
THE SWADDLING CLOTHES:
THANKFULNESS

Leader:

We offer our thanksgivings, our wishes,
our love and our joy for our Infant Jesus.
Soon, very soon, Jesus will be born. Let
us spend a few moments to give thanks
for His Presence among us and to
prepare our hearts for His coming.
(Pause to reflect)

Let us pray:

O Emmanuel, thank You for dwelling in
our hearts. Come and be with us now
and forever. We ask this in Your Name,
Lord Jesus as we await Your coming.

All: Amen.

*Invite members of the family to add the
swaddling clothes to the Nativity scene.
Encourage everyone to give thanks for the
gift of Jesus.*

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus! Come
and visit Your people.

All: We await Your coming.
Come, O Lord.

Sing "Silent Night".

Saturday 25th December

BABY JESUS: LOVE

Leader:

Today, we celebrate the great birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ! The Lord brings the light of hope to His people; a light that no darkness of suffering, worry or fear can extinguish. (*Light the first purple candle.*)

The Lord brings the light of peace to His people; a light that no darkness of violence or trouble can extinguish. (*Light the second purple candle.*)

The Lord brings the light of joy to His people; a light no darkness of prejudice or unhappiness can extinguish. (*Light the pink candle.*)

The Lord brings the light of love to His people; a light that no darkness of hatred and resentment can extinguish. (*Light the fourth candle.*)

Jesus is the Light of the world, He is the light that is stronger than death, the light that nothing can ever overcome. (*Light the white or gold candle.*)

Choose to reflect on one of the readings for the day - 1st Reading: Isa 52:7-10, Heb 1:1-6, Joh 1:1-18. You may wish to focus on what the priest preached in his homily today and discuss what struck you or how has the message challenged you.

Leader:

God our Father loves us so much that He sent His only son Jesus to become a man for us, to save us from our sins and

to show us how we should live as His children. Jesus is Love itself and He invites us today to love one another as God our Father loves us.

Invite family members to place baby Jesus in the manger. Invite all to kneel.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, as we kneel before Your manger in adoration, we thank You. Thank You for coming to save us. May Your Presence, Prince of Peace, bless the world with peace, the poor with care and prosperity, the despairing with hope and confidence, the grieving with comfort and gladness, the suffering with solace and relief.

Loving Jesus, may we love You in union with the holy Mother of God; may our lives be filled with the obedience of St. Joseph and the missionary zeal of the shepherds so that the witness of our lives will shine like the star that lead the Magi to Your manger.

We ask this in Your Name, Lord Jesus as we celebrate your coming to us at Christmas and every day of our lives, and as we await Your coming again at Parousia, when God will be all in all.
All: Amen.

Sing "Joy to the World". Give each other the sign of Christ's peace, joy, hope and love. You may want to give and open some of your Christmas gifts to each other then.

Advent Activities For Neighbourhood Christian Communities And Small Christian Communities:

This Advent, let us experience the joy of waiting together by reminding each other that this is the season of waiting and preparing for the coming of Jesus.

Although the shopping malls would already be playing Christmas carols, we know that this is a period given to us by the Church to truly prepare ourselves spiritually and physically for the coming of our Savior. Let us learn the virtue of patience and wait in joyful hope.

Here are some suggestions for your community:

- Choose a day when your community can come together for a Day of Recollection (You may want to do this online also). Put aside all the frenzied activities of shopping and cooking for a day of praying, reflecting and sharing. You may want to use one of the reflections from this booklet or do a reflection based on Mother Mary's posture of joyful waiting. You may want to go to the following websites for resources.
- Decide together as a community to do an 'Advent fast'. You can choose to 'fast' from talking by listening more. First of all, we can learn to listen to God our Father more during our prayer time and during our reading of the daily Scripture. Then, we listen to each other in the families, in the community, at the workplace and also in the neighbourhood around you. Discover the needs of others and bring them to prayer and ask God our Father to guide our actions to serve the needs of others.
- Decide together as a community how you are to be 'gift' to others. You may want to do an outreach to the poor in your area. You can also consider doing home visits to the sick, homebound neighbours, elderly who are staying on their own or the foreign workers. You can do this together with other NCCs around you or work with the ministries from your parish. Joy is greatly experienced when it is shared and given to others. Use the period of Advent to prepare for your outreach or visits. Do not forget to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and be His witnesses with your outreach activities.

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/advent>

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Advent/>

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