

Year B

Rejoice!

An Advent Pilgrimage into
the Heart of Scripture



Children's Guide

(AGES 7-12)


ASCENSION

Rejoice! An Advent Pilgrimage into the Heart of Scripture: Children's Guide (Ages 7–12) is a free resource for families that is intended for use with *Rejoice! An Advent Pilgrimage into the Heart of Scripture: Year B*.

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Dear Parents,

Rejoice! Welcome to Advent. This is an exciting liturgical season filled with so much anticipation, especially for children. Days off from school, family parties, cookies and other goodies, Christmas carols, special gifts—with so many fun things happening, it can be difficult for children to slow down and remember the real reason for all these wonderful activities.

This *Rejoice! Children's Guide* is filled with short Advent reflections for children aged 7 to 12 years. Each daily reflection encourages young people to pause and pray about the true heart of the season. With each reflection, your children will have the chance to go deeper into the Advent story, their expectation growing for the joyful gift of the Savior on Christmas morning.

Just like the *Rejoice!* series for adults, this children's guide includes a specific theme for each day of Advent. Each Sunday, young people are invited to prepare for the week by listening to a song, engaging in a short activity, and getting ready for a weekly challenge. Each following day of the week includes a short reflection, questions for prayer and journaling, and finally an activity for the whole family. The daily and weekly themes in this guide are closely tied to those in *Rejoice! Year B: An Advent Pilgrimage into the Heart of Scripture* to help facilitate fruitful discussion among family members.

We hope this resource allows your whole family to journey through Advent together and experience the birth of Jesus in an extraordinary way.

God Bless,

The Ascension Team

Before

“Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!”

—Psalm 80:3



Activity of the Week

Advent is about preparing to come face-to-face with Jesus at Christmas. When God’s Son came to earth, he had a face like yours: two eyes, a mouth, a nose, lips, even eyebrows. Jesus had a face.

This week, take a moment to study your reflection in the mirror. You are made in God’s image and likeness. That means you, in body and soul, are a reflection of God. As you study your face in the mirror, consider: What does the face of Jesus look like in your imagination? Imagine coming face-to-face with him at Christmas.

Song of the Week

[“Gabriel’s Message” \(arr. Matt Maher\)](#)



Challenge of the Week

Throughout the week, look around at all the different faces that God created. Each face is a unique reflection of God. Try to see Jesus in the face of one other person this week. It could be a friend, a classmate, a teammate, or even someone you might not get along with. How does recognizing Jesus’ face in theirs help you to love them more?

For the Whole Family

The first candle (purple) on the Advent wreath represents hope. Set up your Advent wreath and light this first candle today.



Expectations

*“O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land
where no water is.”*

—Psalm 63:1

Have you ever been so thirsty that you thought you would do anything for a drink? If you’ve ever eaten something really spicy, or played hard during sports, or been outside during the hottest part of the summer, you probably know what this is like. At times like these, we’re desperate for a glass of water, some milk, a sports drink—anything to quench our thirst. And the longer we have to wait for something to drink, the thirstier we get.

Just as our bodies thirst for water, our souls thirst for God. Advent is a season of waiting—of growing thirstier and thirstier. Jesus wants to quench our thirst at Christmas; he wants to come and satisfy our every need, our every longing. Will you let him quench your thirst?

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Think of a time when you had to wait for something special to happen. What was it like when the day finally came?

2. How can you make space in your heart for all the gifts that God wants to fill you with this Christmas?

For the Whole Family:

Read Luke 1:26–38. Thank Mary for saying yes to God’s call to be the mother of the Savior. Thank your own mom for all she does for you.

Psalms

*“Trust in the LORD, and do good;
so you will dwell in the land, and be nourished in safety.
Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*

—Psalm 37:3-4

Have you ever wished that you could time travel? Maybe you wished to go back to the three months of summer vacation during the cold winter months. Maybe you thought about time-traveling to a few years in the future when you'd be a little older and could have more freedom. Advent is all about traveling through time. It is about trying to look back and enter the story with Mary and Joseph as they waited for Jesus to be born.

The Book of Psalms in the Bible can help us time travel this way. Psalms rest at the heart of Jewish prayer. There are psalms for praising God, crying out to God in times of sadness, and asking for God's help. The psalms we read in the Bible are the same prayers that Mary and Joseph would have prayed during the first Advent!

Look at the words from Psalm 37 above. As you read them, imagine Mary and Joseph reciting the same words in prayer.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Yesterday we talked about expectations. Today's Scripture verse says, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Take time now to tell God the desires of your heart.
2. Psalms are prayers to God. Take time to write a prayer for your family this Advent. Ask the Holy Family to help you.

For the Whole Family:

Set up the structures of your nativity scene today—the stable, trees, and other props if you have them—but don't put any figures inside yet. Ask God to watch over your house and keep your family safe.

Initiative

*“He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.”*

—Psalm 37:6 NIV

Have you ever wanted something that you needed a parent’s permission to get? To convince them, you might have tried doing extra chores around the house, using the words “please” and “thank you” after every sentence, and being extra kind to a sibling—all in the hopes that your parents would see your behavior and let you have what you wanted so badly. This is called taking initiative, a word that stems from the verb *initiate*, which means “to start.”

In our relationship with God, God is always the one taking the initiative. Think about it: God promised us through prophecy in the Old Testament that he would send the Messiah. God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary. God took the initiative to become man and reveal himself to us in the flesh. God is taking the initiative because there is something he wants more than anything in the world: your heart!

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Can you think of a time when you took the initiative in order to get something you really wanted?

2. God is the one taking the initiative this Advent. He is reaching out to you right now in hopes that you will say yes to him. How can you respond to God’s invitation today?

For the Whole Family:

Today, take time to clean your room without being asked.
Tell Jesus that you are getting ready for him.

Hear

“Let me hear what God the LORD will speak.”

—Psalm 85:8

Try this: turn on a show or movie, but turn the volume all the way down. Can you still figure out what the characters are saying with the sound muted? It can be fun to guess, but it can also be frustrating. You have to fill in the gaps by lip-reading or by looking for other clues.

We all experience times in life when it seems like God’s voice is on mute. You may be trying to hear God, but maybe you feel like he isn’t speaking to you at all. Here’s the truth: God *is* speaking to you. God *wants* to speak to you, always. He wants you to hear his voice even if you struggle to recognize it.

At such times, we can look for clues about the ways God is speaking to us. Pay attention to how the Holy Spirit might be trying to reach you to share his message of love for you.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Have you ever felt like God was on mute when you were praying?

2. Today, read Jeremiah 29:11–14. Ask God to reveal a word or phrase in the text that he wants to use to speak to you. What is God saying to you in the text?

For the Whole Family:

God always wants to speak to us. Today, try to find three clues for how God is speaking to you. It could be another person, a song, a picture, or a story. God can use many different things to get our attention.

Who

“Let me hear what God the LORD will speak.”

—Psalm 85:8

At the start of the Gospel of Luke, we meet a man named Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. In Luke 1, it says that when the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that he and his wife were going to have a son, Zechariah’s first reaction was doubt. Because he doubted, Zechariah was unable to speak until the day his son John was born.

Why did Zechariah doubt? Because he forgot that he was listening to *God*. Sometimes we can be like Zechariah and doubt who we are listening to or what they are saying. Today ask God again to help you hear his voice, and don’t forget who it is you are listening to. The God of the universe is speaking to you.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Have you ever heard a story that you doubted was real, but it turned out to be true?

2. What can you do to help you remember that when you pray, you are not just having any regular conversation? How can you help yourself remember who you are listening to and speaking with—the same God who came to earth as a baby boy?

For the Whole Family:

God speaks to us in many ways, but one of the best ways is through his holy Word in Scripture. Take out your Bible and ask a family member to read the story of Zechariah (Luke 1:5–25).

Speak

“Let me hear what God the LORD will speak.”

—Psalm 85:8

Has your pet dog, cat, or fish ever used human words to tell you what they need? Probably not. And yet, somehow, you can usually recognize when your pet needs something. You know when they need to eat, when they want to go out, and when they want to play. How come? Because you’ve learned how to listen. You can communicate with them because you notice their movements, their noises, even their facial expressions. You can understand them in a way that goes beyond words.

To hear God, we need to understand *how* he speaks to us. We need to recognize his “language.” Sometimes we hear the Holy Spirit speaking to us with words—but God also communicates in ways that go beyond words. Often he speaks very gently, such as through the words of a friend or a familiar song. In such moments, you may suddenly realize that you feel very peaceful, or maybe a certain memory pops up. God speaks to us in different ways—sometimes unexpected ways. *He is speaking right now. Listen!*

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. In what ways do you think God speaks to you?

2. Keep track of the ways that you hear God speak to you today. Write them down.

For the Whole Family:

Jesus was born in a stable, a place for animals. He was surrounded by sheep, oxen, and donkeys at his birth. Do a little research and find a local animal shelter where you can donate some blankets or towels.

Best

“For he will speak peace to his people.”

—Psalm 85:8



Activity of the Week

We give people greeting cards to say many things, like “Happy Birthday” or “Get Well Soon.” When we make a card for someone we care about, we don’t just do a quick pencil scribble. We take our time, using colors, pictures, and designs that will make the person happy when they open it. We put our best effort into our work.

When God sent Jesus into the world at Christmas, God gave us his best. He sent *his only Son* to save us. This week, make a Christmas thank-you card for God. Thank God for this gift of his Son, Jesus. Be sure to put your best effort into your work.

Song of the Week

[“Holy Is His Name” \(John Michael Talbot\)](#)



Challenge of the Week

This week, try to put your best effort into everything you do. Do your best for others because God does his best for you. Remember, doing your best does not mean doing things perfectly; it means trying your hardest in everything you do.

For the Whole Family

The second candle (purple) on the Advent wreath represents peace. Light this second candle on your Advent wreath today.



Truth

“Mercy and faithfulness will meet.”

—Psalm 85:10

Have you ever done a “True/False” test in school? These questions can be tricky. One word in the sentence can change the whole statement and make you question what you studied.

Thankfully, with God, we never need to question whether his words are true or false. He *always* speaks the truth. Think about Mary: When the angel Gabriel tells Mary that her cousin Elizabeth is pregnant, Mary believes it even without proof. In fact, Mary quickly travels to Jerusalem (a week-long trip at that time) to visit Elizabeth, and that’s the first time she sees that Elizabeth is indeed pregnant (Luke 1:36–41). Mary trusts that what the angel tells her is true because she knows the message is from God, and God speaks the truth.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. How can you trust what God is telling you, even when it is hard?

2. Think about Mary’s deep trust in God. Even without seeing, Mary believed that what was spoken to her by God’s messenger was true. God wants you to trust him like this. How can you practice putting your trust in God today?

For the Whole Family:

During the first Advent, Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. They were able to help each other. Today, make a list of all the people God has placed in your life to help you, and say a short prayer for each person.

See

“Righteousness will go before him, and make his footsteps a way.”

—Psalm 85:13

Have you ever gotten caught whispering to a friend in class when you should have been paying attention? You and your friend goof off a little behind the teacher’s back—and then, when you feel the teacher’s eyes on you, you freeze. Your teacher doesn’t say anything. He just gives you “the look”: a direct stare, eyebrows furrowed, wearing a frown of disapproval. And that’s when you know you’re in trouble.

When we pray, sometimes we might wonder if God is giving us “the look.” We wonder if he is angry at us for our sins or if he’s frustrated with us for not saying the right words or sitting the right way. But God is not frowning down on you in disapproval, ready to tell you how much trouble you’re in. When God looks at you, he sees his beloved child. Right at this very moment, he is smiling at you in love. He always looks at you with gentleness and kindness.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Before you pray today, take a moment to think about how God sees you and how he is looking at you. Ask God to help you remember how he looks at you, even when you may have done something you weren’t supposed to do.

2. After you consider how God looks at you, describe or draw what you think God’s smile looks like.

For the Whole Family:

God is always reaching out to us to show us how much he loves us. Today, bake cookies and give them to someone to show them how much you love them.

Settle

“Let me hear what God the LORD will speak.”

—Psalm 85:8

Let’s be honest: recess is the best part of the school day. At recess you can be loud, you can talk to your friends, you can run around and play different games. When recess is over, it can be hard to go back to the quiet classroom and switch back to your “inside voice,” as teachers say. It probably takes you a minute or two to stop talking and get settled. To shift your focus back to learning, you have to be in the right place and free from distractions.

The same thing is true when we come to talk to God. We need to take the time to step away from the games we play or the screens we watch. We need to settle into a quiet space, free from distractions. When you pray today, take a few minutes to quiet down and settle into the stillness. Remember who you are talking to and how he looks at you.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Do you sometimes have a hard time quieting yourself down? Ask Jesus to help you get quiet so you can hear his voice.

2. Where is your favorite place to pray? Write down the places in your home, at your church, or outside where you enjoy talking to God.

For the Whole Family:

Take some quiet time today away from your games, TV, and other family members.
Just sit quietly with Jesus for five minutes. What does he say to you?

Intentional

“Rejoice always.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:16

Think of a goal that you worked toward in the past or a goal that you would still like to accomplish in the future. It could be something small, like getting a good grade on a test—or something big, like learning to swim, earning a black belt in martial arts, or mastering a musical instrument. No matter what your goal is, you’ll need to study and practice to achieve it. You may need to set aside some extra study time each day. You may have to give up playing a certain video game for a while, or you may have to say no when a friend asks you to play. You’ll need to take certain steps to help you reach that goal.

If your goal this Advent is to grow closer to Jesus, you’ll need to make certain choices about how you live your day and spend your time so you can reach that goal. This may mean praying when you don’t really feel like it or setting aside a few extra minutes for God each day. What steps can you take to help you feel closer to God than ever on Christmas morning?

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. What is a goal that you have set for yourself in the past? How did you reach this goal?

2. What steps are you taking this Advent to help you get closer to God? Write them down.

For the Whole Family:

As a family, set up your Christmas tree today and decorate it!

Available

“My soul magnifies the Lord.”

—Luke 1:46

Have you ever tried accessing an app on a phone or tablet that just won't open? The app freezes, you restart it; it freezes again, you close out of it; it freezes a third time, and then you shut the whole device down and boot it back up to try again.

Thankfully, God is always available to us. He never glitches, freezes, or stops working. We can access him anytime and anywhere. Sometimes we can be like an app that keeps shutting down, though: we may be afraid to open up to God because we think he might be angry or frustrated about something we've done. But God wants us to be open with him. No matter what, he wants us to speak with him freely, without being scared or afraid.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Can you think of a time when it was hard to talk to God about something? Try writing it down.

2. Read the Scripture verse at the top of the page once more. What do you think it means to “magnify” the Lord?

For Younger Children:

Today, when you get frustrated with something or upset at someone who is not acting the way you want, take a step back and say the name “Jesus” three times, very slowly. You could even spell it out: J-E-S-U-S. Does calling on Jesus help you feel better?

Attuned

“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

—Luke 1:47

Before you were born, you were in your mother’s womb. You sensed her every movement. Every time she laughed, you moved around inside. When she woke up at night, you woke up too. You knew her rhythms, her voice, even her heartbeat. You were so deeply connected to her.

This is how deeply God knows you. He knows what your voice sounds like. He knows when you laugh, when you cry, when you’re awake, when you’re asleep. He knows what your heartbeat sounds like. He knows everything about you—and he wants you to know everything about him. He wants you to be able to recognize his voice, his movements, and his love. He wants you to be able to feel his heartbeat.

When God became man, he had a voice. He had a heartbeat. Close your eyes and imagine yourself gently placing your hand on Jesus’ heart.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Close your eyes and imagine yourself gently placing your hand on Jesus’ heart. What does it feel like?
2. Now place your other hand on your own heart. In your imagination, try to match the rhythm of your heartbeat to the rhythm of Jesus’ heartbeat.

For the Whole Family:

If you are able, pull out the ultrasound images from before your children were born—or show your kids pictures of them as a newborn. Share a little about what it was like before they were born, knowing they were on the way. Then imagine what Mary must have felt when Jesus was in her womb.

Humility

“For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.”

—Luke 1:48



Have you ever had a competition with a friend to see who could hold their breath the longest? For the first few moments, it’s easy. But after a while, your heart starts to beat faster, your head starts to feel weird, and your chest feels ready to explode. This is because your body needs oxygen to survive; if you can’t breathe, you die.

Our souls need God the way our bodies need oxygen. We depend on God for everything: for life, food, our health, our parents. Think about it—if you didn’t have God, you wouldn’t have anything!

This week, make a list of ten things God has given you that you could not live without. Then take some time to thank God for these things.



[“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” \(Traditional Hymn\)](#)



This week, be on the lookout for someone who might need your help. Even if you can’t help them yourself, you can always pray for them.

For the Whole Family

The third candle (pink) on the Advent wreath represents joy. Light this third candle on your Advent wreath today, and smile at others to share this joy.



Family

“Pray constantly.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:17

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were a family. They were a family even before Jesus was born. They were bonded together by God. In fact, God chose Mary and Joseph to be the mother and foster father of his only Son.

God is the great designer of families, and family bonds are something that can never be broken. God designed *your* family. He chose all the people in your life—your parents, your aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins—and you will always have a connection to them. Just as Mary and Joseph helped Jesus learn and grow, your family helps you learn and grow. Today, thank God for the gift of your family and try to do something nice for them.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Think about each member of your family. What makes each person special?

2. Say a special prayer for each member of your immediate family. It doesn't have to be long, just a “Thank you, Jesus, for_____.”

For the Whole Family:

In your nativity scene, place Mary next to Joseph. As a family, pray one decade of the Rosary together. Ask the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to watch over you and guide your family.

Balance

“Do not quench the Spirit.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:19

When Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, it took four days for them to get there by donkey. Can you imagine riding on a donkey for four days? Think about what it would have been like for Mary, trying to balance on the donkey’s back as it swayed back and forth. Mary was also carrying Jesus inside of her, and there probably wasn’t much room on the donkey with the clothes, food, and supplies they had with them for the trip. Mary was probably very uncomfortable.

This week, whenever you feel uncomfortable or frustrated with a situation, take a step back and think about Mary balancing on the donkey. Ask her to help you be patient.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Draw a picture of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem, with Joseph leading the donkey and Mary riding on its back. Reflect on what that trip must have been like.

2. Write a special prayer for those who are traveling this time of year, especially those who are about to have a baby.

For the Whole Family:

Jesus was born in a stable, and his crib was made of hay. Go to the store and pick out a few baby items such as wipes, blankets, and diapers. Then drop them off as a donation to a local pregnancy center.

Priorities

“Test everything; hold fast what is good.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:21

Do you know what it means to prioritize? Prioritizing means putting the most important things first. It can be hard to prioritize during the Advent season. There are so many things that we want to do—like baking cookies, watching Christmas movies, hanging lights, setting up the tree, writing our wish lists to Santa, buying gifts for family members, and so much more. Sometimes we are so busy with these fun things that we forget why we are even doing them in the first place.

Jesus is the reason for the lights, the tree, the cookies, the presents. Jesus is the priority, the most important part of this entire season. In all your preparation and celebration this Advent, ask Jesus to help you remember that he is the real reason for the season.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. How are you prioritizing God this Advent?

2. If you have been too busy to put God first, start today by telling him how excited you are for his birth at Christmas.

For the Whole Family:

Jesus is the light for the world. Decorate by putting up a few Christmas lights around the house to remind you of the light that Jesus is bringing into the darkness of the world.

Patience

“For your merciful love was established for ever.”

—Psalm 89:2

Have you ever had to wait a long time for something you really wanted? Maybe you waited all school year for summer vacation. Maybe you waited all day for dessert. Maybe you are waiting for something exciting right now. We all are waiting for something.

During Advent, we wait for the birth of Jesus Christ. You might be thinking, “Okay, sure, but he already came 2,000 years ago.” You’re right—but every year, Jesus is born again in our hearts. We remember the many long years that the world waited for the Savior. We remember that Jesus is the best gift that God could give us, and we thank him for it. We also remember that one day Jesus will be coming back to take us to heaven to live with him forever.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Is it easy for you to wait for things? Why or why not?

2. Ask God for the gift of patience.

For the Whole Family:

Today, exercise patience in some way, maybe by letting a sibling go first or offering up a little prayer such as “Jesus, I trust in you” during times when you have to wait (in line, in traffic, etc.).

More

“With my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.”

—Psalm 89:1

Yesterday we talked about how it can be hard to wait for something we really want. It can be even harder to wait for something when we have been let down before. For example, maybe you were expecting to go to a certain restaurant for dinner only to find out it was closed. Maybe you looked forward to the weekend so you could sleep in and then found out you had to get up early anyway. Maybe you hoped to spend time with one of your very best friends but were later told they weren't coming. It can be hard to wait so long for something only to end up disappointed.

The good news is that God is ever faithful. This means he will never let us down. God keeps his promises. Whatever he says he is going to do, he does. He promised to send us his Son, and he did! If you feel let down this Advent, look up and remember that God is faithful.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Have you ever been let down before by someone you loved?

2. Can you think of a time when God answered your prayers? How did he do this? If you are still waiting for a prayer to be answered, tell Jesus your prayer and trust that he will answer you at the right time.

For the Whole Family:

An angel appeared to the shepherds and told them where Jesus was to be born. Place the shepherds and the angel in your nativity scene.

Ask

*“My merciful love I will keep for him forever,
and my covenant will stand firm for him.”*

—Psalm 89:29

Have you ever had a question that you really wanted to know the answer to, but you were afraid to ask it? Maybe you were afraid of how your teachers or classmates would react. Would the teacher choose not to answer? Would your classmates think the question was silly and laugh?

We never need to be afraid of asking God for things. God will never tell us to stop asking questions, no matter how silly we think they might seem. God loves to answer our prayers. Sometimes, when we ask God for something, we want him to answer in a certain way. When we don't get the answer we are looking for, we might get angry or upset and think that God doesn't care. This is not true. We know that God wants what is best for us.

The people in Jesus' time were waiting for a great warrior to save them and overthrow Rome. God did give them a savior—but he gave them something far better than they could imagine. He gave them his own Son.

Discussion Questions/Journal Entry:

1. Can you think of a time when you thought you wanted one thing, but instead you got something way better?
2. What question do you have for God right now? What questions are in your heart?

For the Whole Family:

After Jesus was born, the Magi (wise men) brought Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Pick out gifts to give to each of your family members. Place the wise men in your nativity scene.

A Special Note About the Fourth Week of Advent

In the liturgical year, Roman Catholics always observe four Sundays of Advent—but the Solemnity of the Nativity (Christmas Day, December 25) can fall on any day of the week. This means the fourth “week” isn’t always a full seven days; sometimes it’s only one day long, with the Fourth Sunday of Advent falling on Christmas Eve!

This final week of Advent will feel different from the first three weeks—because this week, you have the chance to participate in imaginative prayer. Imaginative prayer is a way of praying with the Lord by using your imagination and your senses. Instead of daily reflections like the previous weeks, you will find seven meditations that will guide your imagination through the different moments of Jesus’ birth. Depending on how long the fourth week of Advent is this year, you may choose to pray with one meditation a day, as usual, or perhaps several at a time. The point is to continue to keep Jesus’ birth in mind in these final days of the Advent season. It’s hard to sit still and focus with all the excitement surrounding Christmas presents, cookies, and parties just ahead. Jesus understands this too—but think of how happy it would make him if you set aside a few minutes to be with him and honor his birthday!

One thing that can help us in imaginative prayer is to use our five senses. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and then use your five fingers to help you count your five senses. Lift your thumb, and then name one thing you *see* in the scene (for example, the wooden manger that baby Jesus was resting in). Lift your pointer finger, and then name one thing you *hear* (for example, the cows mooing in the stable). Lift your middle finger next, and then name one thing you *smell* (for example, the hay in the stable or the smell of animals). Lift your ring finger, and then name one thing you *taste* (for example, imagine Mary and Joseph eating a meal after Jesus was born. What meal are you thinking of? What does it taste like?) Finally, lift your little finger, and then name one thing you *feel or touch* (for example, the cold night air or the warmth of a fire against your skin). Use your five senses to help you be present with Jesus on that first Christmas night!

Wonder

“Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.”

—Matthew 2:11



At last, we have come to the final days of Advent. Jesus is almost here. It's nearly time to celebrate his birthday!

Have you ever helped throw a birthday party for someone? It takes a lot of preparation. You have to get food, bake a cake, decorate, plan games, and make favors for the guests. And don't forget presents!

When Jesus was born, there was no place prepared for him. There was no room for him in any inn in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph made a crib for him in a manger in a stable, but they had no birthday cake to give him, no decorations, no games. Even so, there was a wondrous celebration. An entire host of angels joyfully announced the Savior's birth to shepherds in the fields. Wise men bearing special gifts came to visit the newborn King of the universe.

This week, do your best to prepare for Jesus' birthday through all your actions. Let everything you do be a way to announce the joy of Jesus' coming for others.



[“O Come, All Ye Faithful” \(Traditional Hymn\)](#)



Challenge
of the Week

Show a little extra kindness to those you meet this week. Make every interaction a special decoration for Jesus' birthday.

For the Whole Family

The fourth candle (purple) on the Advent wreath represents peace. Light this fourth candle on your Advent wreath today.



Mary

“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

—Luke 1:38

Find a quiet place to pray. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and picture Mary in your imagination. Imagine she is holding the baby Jesus in her arms and whispering softly to him. The night air is cold, and she wraps Jesus tightly in the blankets she has brought for this moment. What does she look like? What does her voice sound like? What is she wearing? Breathe in and out three times. Thank Mary for being Jesus’ mother and your mother.

Joseph

“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.”

—Matthew 1:24

Find a quiet place to pray. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and picture St. Joseph in your imagination. He is sitting just outside the stable, holding baby Jesus and looking up at the stars. Imagine what he looks like. Visualize his hair, his beard, his face, and his eyes. Breathe in and out three times. Thank St. Joseph for being Jesus’ earthly father, and ask him to watch over you.

The Holy Family

"Perfect love casts out fear."

—1 John 4:18

Find a quiet place to pray. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and picture both Mary and Joseph in your imagination. Jesus is sleeping; Mary and Joseph are talking quietly about the journey they have just taken. When they see you, they ask you to come sit with them. They tell you that their little family is your family too. Ask them to bless and watch over your family.

Shepherds

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

—Luke 12:32

Find a quiet place to pray. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and imagine the shepherds in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks. It is peaceful; every so often you can hear the sheep stir and bleat. Suddenly, the night sky is as bright as day, and angels are singing the most beautiful music you have ever heard: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth!” Be with the shepherds as they hear the announcement of Jesus’ birth.

Wise Men

“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

—Matthew 6:8

Find a quiet place to pray. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and imagine the three wise men traveling on camelback to see the newborn king. They are silent as they travel, wondering how the new baby and his family will use the gifts they are bringing. The only sound is their camels’ feet on the rocky ground. Every so often they look up and make sure the star they saw at its rising is still shining brightly. Be with the wise men as they journey to Bethlehem to meet the baby Jesus.

Animals

*“And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth
and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying,
‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever.’”*

—Revelation 5:13

Find a quiet place to pray. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and imagine the animals in the stable. Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus are people they have not seen before. A hush has fallen over the animals, and they watch intently as Jesus looks around the stable. When Jesus raises a little hand to touch them, the animals bow down low so he can reach them. Look at the animals with Jesus and touch the animals' faces with him.

Stable

*“Henceforth all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.”*

—Luke 1:48–49

Find a quiet place to pray. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and picture the empty stable, sitting quietly. All is still. The animals are in their stalls, and there is a soft breeze stirring. The air smells of hay and animals. Baby Jesus is sleeping soundly. Mary and Joseph have not left the side of their makeshift crib since Jesus was born. Place yourself in this scene. Stand near the animals, then Joseph, then Mary—and finally, come close beside baby Jesus. Look down on him, the Savior of the world.

Face

*“And the Word became flesh
and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth;
we have beheld his glory.”*

—John 1:14

Joy to the world! At last, the day is finally here. Jesus, the Lord, has come. After our Advent season of preparation, it’s time to celebrate Jesus’ birth!

At the very beginning of Advent, you imagined what the face of Jesus looked like. Here is one final reflection to help you wrap up your Advent journey and begin the happy celebration of Christmas:

Find a quiet place to pray today. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and imagine yourself in the manger scene alone with baby Jesus and the animals. You see Jesus’ face: his tiny nose, his small eyes, his little mouth. As you look at him, Jesus sees you and smiles. There is no other place he would rather be than right here with you. What do you want to say to him now?

Merry Christmas!