

November

LEADER'S OVERVIEW

EXPLORING THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

ADULT MEETING

Questions to Explore this Month:

- › What is Original Sin? What is Grace?
- › How did God continue to offer His love and mercy to mankind after the Fall?

Materials:

- › PowerPoint
- › Catechetical Video
- › Discussion Questions
- › Fridge Sheet
- › Car Conversations Hang Tag

COMMUNITY MEETING

INDOOR ACTIVITIES TO PREPARE FOR ADVENT

Goals for the Community Meeting:

- › Families are excited to truly observe Advent.
- › Families write a “Family Advent Covenant” where they promise to do certain activities to prepare their hearts and homes for the coming of Christ.

Key terms and concepts in your families' lessons this month



LESSON 3

Made in His Image, But Fallen from Grace

CCC 343, 355-356, 374-379

Immortal Soul	Grace
Original Holiness	Original Sin
Original Justice	Beatific Vision

LESSON 4

Called to Be His People—Promised a Savior

CCC 54-73, 287-289

Salvation History
Covenant
Advent
Prophet



LEADER'S TO-DO LIST FOR NOVEMBER

- Make copies of all handouts for the Adult Meeting.
ASSIGNED TO: _____
- Make copies of all handouts for the Community Meeting.
ASSIGNED TO: _____
- Gather enough half-egg crates to give one to each family.
ASSIGNED TO: _____
- Prepare an egg-crate manger to show as an example at the Community Meeting.
ASSIGNED TO: _____
- Prepare sacrifice strips to show as an example.
ASSIGNED TO: _____
- Gather and make any desired decorations for the Community Meeting "stations," e.g., an Advent wreath, crepe-paper streamers, a nativity set, or construction paper signs.
ASSIGNED TO: _____

ADULT MEETING OUTLINE

MONTH OF NOVEMBER

Meeting Summary

Parents learn what it means to be created in the image of God and about man's place in creation as well as the love story of salvation history.

Handouts

- › Discussion Questions
- › Fridge Page
- › Car Conversations Hang Tag

I. Your Witness

3-5 MINUTES

Begin with a prayer, and then by sharing a brief story from your own life about a time you broke a promise to a family member (or someone broke a promise they had made to you.) The goal is to set the stage for discussing how mere contracts differ from covenants. Include in your story:

- › what promise was made
- › how you felt when it was broken (or how the other person felt)
- › why you persevered in the relationship, rather than simply cutting the person out of your life

II. Questions To Set the Stage

5 MINUTES

Transition by writing the following questions on the board (or use the accompanying PowerPoint), and ask for volunteers to answer them in turn. Lead the discussion toward the conclusion below.

1. If you contracted with a painter to paint your house, and he didn't paint it, what would happen?
2. If you contracted with caterers to serve filet mignon at a party, and they show up with hamburger helper, what would happen?
3. If you set house rules, and your children break them, what happens? Do you disown your child?
4. If you agree with your spouse that one of you will clean the house while the other gets a

much-needed break with friends, and at the end of the day the house is still dirty, what happens?

5. Based on these examples, what can we derive is the difference between a contract and a covenant?

CONCLUSION

While contracts set terms of a temporary relationship, covenants forge permanent, family bonds. They are much more serious and enduring than mere contracts. Marriage, for example, is a covenant, and not a contract. God entered into covenants with mankind, and the first of these was with Adam. Even though man broke the covenant by disobeying God, God's love and mercy never faded. He began a plan to reconcile humanity back to Himself. Many people mistakenly believe the Old Testament shows us an angry, vengeful God, while His mercy begins to be revealed in the New Testament. The truth is that God is love. His mercy was clear from the beginning and remains throughout all of salvation history.

III. PowerPoint Presentation and Sacred Art

20 MINUTES

Present the Year One – November PowerPoint to the whole group. Next, show the sacred art for this month: *The Deluge* by Michelangelo. Parents have color copies on page 191 of their guides. Spend a few moments viewing the image in silence, and then discuss the conversation questions in the PowerPoint. Do not worry if the conversation goes in unexpected directions!



IV. Catechetical Video

25 MINUTES

Show the catechetical video to the whole group.

V. Small Group Discussion

20 MINUTES

Put parents in groups of six, and give each group one set of discussion questions. (As much as possible, make sure they are evenly distributed.) *Note: These questions are based on the parent readings for this month. Have them discuss the questions in their small groups. Handouts of the questions for each group are at the end of the meeting outline.*

- › They may use their parent readings as references if they would like.
- › Ask each group to assign someone to write down their responses on the handout.

VI. Large Group Sharing

20 MINUTES

With at least 20 minutes left, invite groups to share their questions and answers with the large group. Aim to spend about five minutes on each set of questions. If your pastor can be present for this part, invite him to guide the discussion. If not, below are correct answers to the discussion questions.

Note: While leading the discussion, it is important to recognize the different places people are on their faith journeys. Be encouraging of questions, yet clear when someone's understanding is wrong.

DISCUSSION QUESTION ANSWERS

Group 1: Made in God's Image

- Does the fact we are created in the image and likeness of God mean we look like God? Explain.
No. It means we have certain qualities and capacities that God has.
- What three qualities of human persons mean we alone out of all creation are made in the image and likeness of God?
Intellect, free will, and the capacity to love.
- We are created for communion with each other and with God. How does this truth connect to being created in God's image?
God is love, and He created humanity out of love and a desire to share His Divine Life with us.
- Our culture tends to treat love as a "feeling." But love is not a feeling; it is a choice. How does Jesus' life show us this truth?
Jesus loves unfailingly, even through pain and suffering. If love were only a "feeling," Jesus would not have endured the Crucifixion. Jesus' life shows us that love is a free choice to give of oneself for the good of another.

Group 2: Man's Place in Creation

- How would you define Original Holiness and Justice?
Man was created in a state of Original Holiness and Original Justice. God gave Adam and Eve all the knowledge that they would need, and their wills did not tend to sin. They were God's friends, and they shared in His divine life. They were filled with grace. Adam and Eve's original state of grace is called Original Holiness. Original Justice means that all creation was in

harmony, and nothing in creation could hurt Adam and Eve. They would never be sick, suffer, or die.

2. How would you define Original Sin?

Adam and Eve used their free will to rebel against God. It is called original because it happened at the origin of man and is passed on to each person at his origin.

3. How did Original Sin change humanity's relationship with God?

We are born without God's grace in our soul.

4. Mercy is love that keeps loving even when it is rejected. How does this definition apply to the story of Adam and Eve?

God did not abandon humanity after the fall.

Group 3: The Christian Faith, A Love Story

1. What is salvation history?

The story of how God made Himself known in specific ways, to prepare His people for the gift of salvation.

2. Where can we encounter the story of salvation history?

In Scripture.

3. How is God's love for humanity a love story? How is it unlike any human love story?

It is the story of God pursuing his beloved – humanity. Unlike any human love story, God is unfailingly faithful.

4. God made Himself known in specific ways, to prepare His people for the gift of salvation. What attributes of God that we learned about last month apply to His plan for salvation?

All the attributes of God connect to this truth.

Group 4: God's Mercy and Covenants

1. With whom did God make the very first covenant?

The very first man – Adam.

2. What promises did God make to Abraham? How do we see them fulfilled in future covenants?

God made Abraham three promises: a land (or nation), a name (or dynasty), and a worldwide blessing.

3. Which covenant fulfills all other covenants?

The New Covenant in Jesus Christ.

4. What are some ways that all of us today are like the ancient Israelites?

We, too, must wait and prepare for the coming of our Savior.

VII. Reminders and Announcements

- ▶ Announce the location, date, and time of the upcoming Community Meeting.
- ▶ Give out the **Fridge Page** and **Car Conversations** hang tag for this month.
- ▶ Remind parents that – as always – they do not need to do all the activities offered this month. They should, however, make an effort to do the ones that go in their Storybook project.

VIII. Closing Prayer and Encouragement

Write on the board the quotation:

“Those who celebrate the sacrament [of marriage] say, ‘I promise to be true to you, in joy and in sadness, in sickness and in health; I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.’ At that moment, the couple does not know what will happen, nor what joys and pains await them. They are setting out, like Abraham, on a journey together. And that is what marriage is! Setting out and walking together, hand in hand, putting yourselves in the Lord’s powerful hands. Hand in hand, always and for the rest of your lives.”

– Pope Francis

Ask parents to reflect on this quotation for a few moments, and then close in prayer such as:

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Dear Lord, thank You for the chance to spend time together learning about the wonderful way You have chosen to reveal Yourself to mankind. Bless all of the married couples in this room, and give them Your grace to persevere in their marriage covenant. Bless all of our homes this Thanksgiving. Help us especially as we enter the Advent season, to wait patiently and prepare our hearts and homes to receive You. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

GROUP
1

MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Use the essays in your parents' guide to help answer these questions.

1. Does the fact we are created in the image and likeness of God mean we look like God? Explain.
2. What three qualities of human persons mean we alone out of all creation are made in the image and likeness of God?
3. We are created for communion with each other and with God. How does this truth connect to being created in God's image?
4. Our culture tends to treat love as a "feeling." But love is not a feeling; it is a choice. How does Jesus' life show us this truth?

GROUP
2

MAN'S PLACE IN CREATION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Use the essays in your parents' guide to help answer these questions.

1. How would you define Original Holiness and Justice?
2. How would you define Original Sin?
3. How did Original Sin change humanity's relationship with God?
4. Mercy is love that keeps loving even when it is rejected. How does this definition apply to the story of Adam and Eve?

GROUP
3

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, A LOVE STORY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Use the essays in your parents' guide to help answer these questions.

1. What is salvation history?
2. Where can we encounter the story of salvation history?
3. How is God's love for humanity a love story? How is it unlike any human love story?
4. God made Himself known in specific ways, to prepare His people for the gift of salvation. What attributes of God that we learned about last month apply to His plan for salvation?

GROUP
4

GOD'S MERCY AND COVENANTS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Use the essays in your parents' guide to help answer these questions.

1. With whom did God make the very first covenant?
2. What promises did God make to Abraham? How do we see them fulfilled in future covenants?
3. Which covenant fulfills all other covenants?
4. What are some ways that all of us today are like the ancient Israelites?

Celebrate!

OLD TESTAMENT PATRIARCHS



“The patriarchs, prophets and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honored as saints in all the Church’s liturgical traditions.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 61

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH:

- 1 Pray for a departed loved one, and remember him by doing a special activity he enjoyed together as a family.
- 2 Have a fish dinner to celebrate the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle on **November 30**.

VERSE OF THE MONTH **GENESIS 1:27**

“God created mankind in His image; in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.”

REMEMBER!

It is a Spiritual Work of Mercy to pray for the living and the dead. In November, we pray for the faithful departed in a special way.

Add this prayer to your prayer before meals:

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let the perpetual light shine upon them. And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

MEMORIZE!

God made covenants with mankind. The major Old Testament covenants were with **Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David**.



CAR *Conversations*

— — — — —
— — — — —
God keeps His promises! Share
a story about a time you saw
God's hand working in your life.

— — — — —
— — — — —
**What is your favorite part
of each Old Testament story
you read this month?** Take
turns naming a patriarch and
sharing what you liked most
about his story.

COMMUNITY MEETING PREPARATION

MONTH OF NOVEMBER

Meeting Summary

The goal of the meeting is to help families realize that their joy in Christmas will be deeper if they truly enter into the season of Advent, and then give them encouragement and concrete ways to do so.

Sample Timeline

1:00 p.m.

Opening prayer, review, and connection to lessons

1:20 p.m.

Families write Advent Covenants

1:40 p.m.

Advent Stations

2:00 p.m.

Prayer service followed by fellowship

Meeting Preparation

- ▶ Several days beforehand, make copies of all handouts for the Community Meeting.
- ▶ Gather enough half-egg crates to give one to each family. (Or get half as many 12-egg crates as you have families, and cut each one in half.)
- ▶ Prepare a painted egg-crate manger to show as an example at the Community Meeting.
- ▶ Prepare sacrifice strips to show as an example.
- ▶ Gather decorations for the three stations (described below).

The Day of the Meeting

Before families arrive, set up three “stations” in separate areas of the room and place the handouts for one of the three special Advent activities at each station. Decorate each station, for example:

- ▶ Set up a nativity set and include a sacrifice manger made out of an egg crate for the manger sacrifice activity.
- ▶ Bring in an advent wreath for the prayer activity station.
- ▶ Bring streamers or a happy birthday banner for the birthday party for the Jesus station.
- ▶ You may wish also to make signs out of construction paper.

Materials

- › Simple Ways to Make the Most of Advent handout
- › Advent Family Covenant handout
- › Advent Blessing and Prayer handout
- › Advent Manger Sacrifice Activity handout
- › Birthday Party for Jesus handout
- › One half-egg crate for each family
- › Sample egg-crate manger
- › Station decorations, if desired

COMMUNITY MEETING OUTLINE

MONTH OF NOVEMBER

I. Opening Prayer

Mark 13: 32-37

Advent is a time of being awake, watchful, and ready!

II. Review and Connection to Lessons

Note: Whenever possible, make an effort to call on all the children, rather than letting a few families dominate. You can say, "Let's give someone else a chance" if a few children are more motivated than others. If you are not able to call on everyone, make a mental note to pay special attention to the ones who did not answer a question during other parts of the meeting.

- A. With the families in one big group, ask the children the following questions, along with any others you may wish to add:
 - › God created mankind very special. He created us in His... what?
 - › What happened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God?
 - › Who was Noah? Can anyone tell me what he did?
 - › Who was Abraham? Can anyone tell me what he did?
 - › Can anyone tell me about any other people who God used to make covenants with mankind?
 - › When people made covenants with God, many times the people broke their promises. Did God keep His promises?
 - › The Israelites wanted God to come, but they had to be patient and wait. We wait for Jesus too, don't we? What season are we about to begin that is a special time to wait and prepare for Jesus?
- B. In a mini-lecture, you or your pastor should go over the content below with all of the families.
 - › Advent is not Christmas. It is a season of its own, and it is one of waiting and preparing for the coming of Jesus at Christmas and at the end of time.

- ▶ The society we live in, though, has other ideas! More and more, our culture is based on immediate gratification, and the secularization and commercialization of Christmas start earlier and earlier each year.
- ▶ By the time Christmas finally arrives, many people have had enough and are ready for it to be over – when it has barely even begun! This leaves many of us feeling empty, and robs us of the real joy of Christmas. Material gifts such as toys, clothes, jewelry, etc., are good, and can make us happy for a time, but they don't truly satisfy us. Only Christ can do that.
- ▶ The celebration of Advent is the solution to keeping Christ in Christmas and helping us to arrive there with joy and great anticipation. When we must wait for something, we become keenly aware of the event. We enjoy the anticipation of it, even though it may be hard to wait. Waiting for Christmas becomes easier when we celebrate Advent.
- ▶ Ask families to follow along in their Bibles as you read aloud John 17:14-15. Here, Jesus explains that He and His disciples do not “belong to the world.” In other words, they do not conform themselves to the present time, culture, and values, which are so often spiritually confused and morally wrong. Rather, as St. Paul tells us in Romans 12:2: “Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.”
- ▶ Advent is the perfect time to answer this call to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Amid all the secularization and commercialization, we can know and live the real meaning of Advent.
- ▶ If possible, share a quick story from your own life (or, even better, call on a parent present to share one) about how it was hard for a child to wait for Christmas, but how waiting “paid off” with increased joy, wonder, and faith at Christmastime.

III. Activities

- A. Pass out the **Simple Ways to Make the Most of Advent** handout and give families a few moments to read it together. Give a brief explanation of the three special activities listed at the bottom of the **Simple Ways to Make the Most of Advent** handout.
- B. Tell them that each family will be given time to write an **Advent Family Covenant**. Pass out this handout, and explain that in this covenant they will make an agreement with God about how they will wait and prepare for

Christ during the Advent season. Their covenants should include one or two of the special activities at the bottom.

- C. Give families 10 minutes to “huddle.” They should reflect on what has been said and make their own game plan for how they will celebrate the season of Advent in their homes.
- D. Now that every family has decided what they will do, have families go to the different stations and get their materials and ask questions. Looking at the activity sheets may give them more ideas for their **Advent Family Covenant**.
- E. Bring all families together in prayer to dedicate each family’s covenant to God and asking Him to bless each family’s Advent preparations.
- F. End with fellowship.

SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF ADVENT



- ▶ Hang your **Bible promise stars** from Lesson Four in a prominent place and pray to grow in trust of God and His Word.
- ▶ Decorate your tree during Advent, but **don't turn on the tree lights until Jesus is born**; that is, until the light of the world is in our midst!
- ▶ **Wait to decorate for Christmas until the last days of Advent.** Or decorate a little each week, waiting to decorate the tree until the last moment.
- ▶ **Place candles in all of your windows.** Let your lights say welcome to all who are without the things of this world that your family has. As you light them remind your family that Christ, the light of the world, is coming soon.
- ▶ Make every Sunday night during Advent a **family story time.** Begin a collection of good Christmas stories that teach Christian values. Make it extra special by lighting a fire in the fireplace (if you have one), making popcorn, and cuddling on the couch.
- ▶ Choose a family member (keeping your chosen person a secret if you can) and become his “**secret saint**” by doing hidden good deeds for him during this special time of the year, e.g., make his bed, leave him a little note of love and cheer, do a chore for him, or leave a chocolate kiss on his pillow.
- ▶ As a family, **pray for everyone on your Christmas card list**, as well as those who send you cards.
- ▶ After you light your tree on Christmas Eve, read aloud the Christmas story as found in **Luke's Gospel**.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES



Advent Blessing and Prayer

The purpose of this activity is to pray in a special way to prepare your family's hearts to receive Christ at Christmas.

Advent Manger Sacrifice Activity

The goal of this activity is to turn little sacrifices you make each day during Advent into a soft bed of love for the Baby Jesus.

Birthday Party for Jesus

The goal of this activity is to bring Jesus' birth to the heart of your home on Christmas Eve.

YOUR LAST NAME

ADVENT FAMILY COVENANT

Take a few moments to reflect on what has been said and, together, make your own plan for how you will celebrate the season of Advent in your home.

Jesus, You are the Light of the World. You always keep Your promises. We promise to wait and prepare for Your arrival this Advent in the following ways:

Please help us to do these things, and bless us in a special way this Advent season.

ADVENT BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS



The purpose of this activity is to pray in a special way to prepare your family's hearts to receive Christ at Christmas.

Below are special prayers to offer throughout the season. Pray each as you light the candles on your Advent wreath. If you don't have one, you can make a simple one with some evergreen leaves and four candles.

First Sunday of Advent

Leader: "A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! ... Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." (Isaiah 40: 3, 5) Lord God, we gather around this wreath and wait and prepare for Your coming once again into our lives. As we light this candle, send forth Your Holy Spirit, who alone can dispel the darkness of our sin and fill us with the light of Your Son, Jesus the Christ. Bless this wreath and our lives as we wait in joyful hope for Your coming.

All respond: Amen.

Light one purple candle tonight and each night of the first week of Advent. Then pray:

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world – Come, Lord Jesus!

All respond: Come, quickly!

Second Sunday of Advent

Leader: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone ... For a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us; upon His shoulder dominion rests. They name Him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9: 1, 6) Father, you loved us so much that you sent light into our darkness – your only Son Jesus. As we light this second candle tonight, may it be a reminder for us of Your everlasting love and Your promise that You will always be with us. Help us to wait with expectant hearts for the fullness of Your kingdom.

All respond: Amen.

ADVENT BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS

Light two purple candles tonight and each night of this second week of Advent. Then pray:

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world – Come, Lord Jesus!

All respond: Come, quickly!

Third Sunday of Advent

Leader: “Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them...” (Luke 2: 8, 9) Lord, as the days grow shorter and the darkness envelopes the earth, this night we light three candles as a sign of hope and joy that soon Christmas will once again be upon us. We are reminded that as You surprised the shepherds with Your glorious light, Your coming always surprises us with joy.

All respond: Amen.

Light two purple candles and the pink candle tonight and each night of this third week of Advent. Then pray:

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world – Come, Lord Jesus!

All respond: Come, quickly!

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Leader: “And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.’” (Luke 2: 13, 14) Father, as we light this fourth candle we join with the heavenly hosts giving praise to You for the gift of Your Son Jesus. He is Emmanuel – God with us! Help us in these final days of preparation to renew once again our desire to receive Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our lives. Fill us with praise as we draw near to the celebration of His birth.

All respond: Amen.

Light three purple candles and the pink candle tonight and each night of this fourth week of Advent. Then pray:

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world – Come, Lord Jesus!

All respond: Come, quickly!

ADVENT BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS

You may end each evening's prayer by singing the following song to the melody of *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*:

O Savior, rend the heavens wide; Come down, come down with mighty stride; Unlock the gates, the doors break down; Unbar the way to heaven's crown.

Or you may sing a verse from the song *O come, O come Emmanuel*.

ADVENT MANGER SACRIFICE ACTIVITY



The goal of this activity is to turn little sacrifices you make each day during Advent into a soft bed of love for the Baby Jesus.

You Will Need

- › Half-egg crate (enough for six eggs)
- › Brown craft paint, paint brushes
- › Small slips of paper or pieces of straw
- › Small baby Jesus figure (store-bought or homemade)

What to Do

Help your children paint your egg crate brown like a wooden manger. On the first Sunday of Advent explain to your family that you will be spending time during the next four weeks preparing a soft and special bed for baby Jesus at Christmas. The bedding that will be used will be made of each family member's special prayers and sacrifices.

For example, every time you do any of the following, write it down on a slip of paper or take a piece of straw and place it in the manger.

- › Say a special prayer
- › Go to an extra Holy Mass
- › Make a sacrifice for a loved one, a friend, or a stranger.

On Christmas Eve, have a time of prayer, a birthday party for Jesus, or a simple procession to the nativity set in your home, if you have one. If you do not have a nativity set you can make a small clay baby Jesus, or buy a plastic one, and place the figure in your Advent manger.

You can close by saying something like, "Happy Birthday Jesus! We have given You the best gift that we could: we have loved one another and made our hearts ready for Your coming into our world and our lives."

ADVENT MANGER SACRIFICE ACTIVITY

Tips

- › Keep your manger wherever the family gathers together most frequently.
- › Talk frequently about sacrifices, especially with young children.
- › Encourage them to see opportunities during their day that would make good “gifts” for baby Jesus’ bed.
- › Speak about what the children did during their day with the rest of the family at your evening meal or at family prayer time.
- › Older children may prefer their sacrifices to be done and recorded in secret.

A BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS!



The goal of this activity is to bring Jesus' birth to the heart of your home on Christmas Eve.

You Will Need

- › Empty cardboard boxes and a white sheet
- › A nativity scene (you can use the manger from the Sacrifice Activity)
- › Old Christmas cards
- › Party decorations
- › Cake mix and frosting
- › Blank paper and markers
- › Cardboard and/or foil for crowns

How to Prepare

On the first Sunday of Advent, set up your manger scene:

- › Set up your manger scene at the beginning of Advent in the spot near where your Christmas tree will be.
- › Take empty cardboard boxes and stack them to look like a mountain or steps leading up to the manger. Cover them with a white sheet. You may want to display the three kings on their way up the mountain.
- › Don't place Jesus in the manger.

During the second week of Advent:

- › Purchase small nativity figurines to be placed on the cake. These can be found at craft or cake decorating stores.
- › Make invitations out of construction paper and decorate them with pictures of the Holy Family cut from old Christmas cards.
- › Have your children send these invitations to their godparents, family, and friends.

A BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS!

On the morning of December 24, prepare for the party:

- › The children help bake and decorate a cake. Set up the nativity scene on top.
- › Decorate the house as you would for other birthday parties. For example, put up balloons, happy birthday vinyl cling stickers, and crepe-paper streamers.
- › Have the party on the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

The Party

- › As people arrive, give them a sheet of paper to write 1) what they've brought as a present to Jesus and, 2) what they're especially thankful to Jesus for giving them this Christmas.
- › They may also draw a symbol for their present to Jesus, such as: an open heart, a peaceful spirit, a song (they may want to sing), or anything else they wish to share.
- › Make homemade crowns with construction paper or foil to represent that we are children of the King.
- › Sing *Silent Night* as the children lead a procession through the house to your manger, carrying the baby Jesus and your gifts to Him. This would be a great time to invite any children who play an instrument to play an accompaniment.
- › One by one, bring your gifts to Jesus and lay them in the manger.
- › Turn on the Christmas tree lights and celebrate the Light of the World having come into our lives, our hearts, and our home!

