

# CONNECTIONS

Your Resource for Building a Strong Catholic Family

## What is Advent?



The word “advent,” from the Latin *adventus* (Greek *parousia*), means “coming” or “arrival.” The **Advent Season** is focused on the “coming” of Jesus as Messiah. Catholic Mass readings and prayers not only prepare us spiritually for Christmas (his first coming), but also for his eventual second coming. This is why the Mass readings during Advent include both Old Testament passages related to the expected Messiah, and New Testament passages concerning Jesus’ second coming as judge of all. Also, passages about John the Baptist, the precursor who prepared the way for the Messiah, are read.

Since Advent looks forward to Christ’s birth and Incarnation, it is an appropriate way to begin the Church Year. However, Advent is not part of the Christmas season itself, but a preparation for it. Thus, Catholics do not sing Christmas hymns, or use Christmas readings, in Mass until December 25th, the first day of the Christmas season.

The liturgical color for Advent is violet (except for the Third Week of Advent, often called *Gaudete Sunday*, in which rose may be used), and the season is somewhat penitential, similar to **Lent**. The character of worship during Advent is more solemn, quiet, and less festive than during other times of the year. In the Catholic Church, for example, the Gloria is not used. The use of violet reflects the general themes of Advent: penance and royalty.

Secular culture and many non-Catholic churches celebrate the day of **Christmas**, but take it outside of the context of Advent and Christmastide. However, Christmas is not meant to be an isolated day, but a festival of the Incarnation. Christmas is only properly understood after having the preparation provided by Advent. In the midst of the secular excesses leading up to Christmas, Advent provides a welcome solace and an opportunity to continually re-orient ourselves to God’s will as we expectantly wait the Incarnation of God the Son.

## Praying with Jesus in the Womb



As Advent approaches, we remember it is our time to prepare for the birth of Christ. By recalling scripture, we realize Mary was also preparing for the coming of Jesus. “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.” Luke 1:30 “He came down from heaven, and by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary” Nicene Creed - the New Roman Missal.

We know Jesus’ life on this earth began in the womb, at the moment of his conception. We can

reflect on this part of the presence of “God with us.” From the moment that the life of Jesus began in Mary’s womb, Jesus became one with us. He was born into this world and made his journey one for us. We ask to be blessed with the gift of hope. These promises, which were fulfilled in this new life, stir our hearts to have faith in those promises in the most challenging times of our journey today. This imaginative prayer allows us to pray more deeply, “Come, Lord Jesus. We await your coming. Come, O Lord.”

With expectant hope, we thank Jesus for these moments of grace, in which he has opened our

eyes to await his coming to us. Just as Mary was expecting to deliver Jesus into this world, we hope to receive him into our hearts. We give thanks for his body, which he so fully gave to us in the love he showed us on earth and in the Eucharist and the Sacraments, as these continue to nourish and sustain us.

So as we prepare this Advent, we await for the coming of the Lord. By incorporating daily prayers this Advent, we can feel closer to Christ and we ask for the further graces we need to open our hearts to his healing mercy and love. ‘Come to us, O Lord’.

### Symbol Key



#### Formation

Fills in the holes of faith knowledge that may have been missed growing up and highlights what makes Catholics distinct.



#### Prayer and Worship

Understanding what happens at Mass and incorporating prayer into family life.



#### Family (The Domestic Church)

Incorporating Catholic customs and traditions into family life.



#### Charity and Service

Highlights charity and service opportunities for the family within St. Francis Parish and the greater community.

# Charity and Service



On November 16, St. Francis hosted a whole community faith formation event called Generations, Growing in Faith Together (GIFT).

This event was catechesis driven with the focus on the Corporal Works of Mercy. Just in time for the Advent season, GIFT included active learning and parishioner involvement through a whole community service project. This service project included parishioners filling shoe boxes with toiletries for those in need, and art supplies for children going through crises or hospitalization. Matt Cato, Director of the Office of Life, Justice and Peace at the Portland Archdiocese also spoke on the Corporal Works of Mercy and why service is so intertwined in our faith.

The Corporal Works of Mercy are a wonderful avenue for family discussions about service to others and our community. Because these works can be easily connected to concrete examples, kids of all ages can relate to the many ways Catholics help their neighbors with everyday physical needs. The Seven Corporal Works of Mercy and corresponding ideas for service are below:

## Feed the Hungry

- Support St. Francis Food Pantry, Hope Diner and holiday food boxes with donations and food drives.
- Educate your family about world hunger.
- Avoid wasting food.

## Shelter the Homeless

- Help neighbors with home repairs.
- Support and/or volunteer at a Hope Shelter.
- Support charitable agencies that build homes and provide support after natural disasters.

## Clothe the Naked

- Donate clothes and shoes in good condition to the St. Francis Clothes Closet.
- Volunteer to work at a family shelter such as Good Neighbor Center.
- Support the work of Catholic Charities refugee resettlement and housing transitions program.

## Visit the Sick

- Volunteer at Sherwood's Faith in Action.
- Support those who are full-time caregivers for family members.
- Cook and deliver meals to the sick and homebound.

## Visit the Imprisoned

- Support and/or participate in ministries to those who are incarcerated like St. Francis Prison Ministry.
- Support job-training and educational programs designed to rehabilitate prisoners.
- Pray for the families of inmates.

## Give to the Poor

- Throw coin change into a jar and periodically donate it to a charity.
- If possible make a regular donation to a charity that tends to the needs of the poor.
- Support Catholic Charities, Love, Inc. and Care to Share.

## Bury the Dead

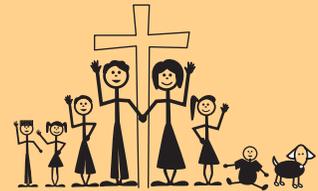
- Support or volunteer at a hospice.
- Take friends and relatives to visit the cemetery.
- Send cards to families of those who have died.

# Advent Family Event



As we pull our favorite Christmas Nativity sets out of our dusty attics and clammy basements, we are reminded of just how humbly Jesus began his life on Earth. More than simply reminding us that Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, Nativity sets remind Christian families of the meager, unadorned simplicity that surrounded His coming. The Christmas season, ironically, seems to be in direct opposition to that simplicity: there are the sparkling, shining, opulent adornments; gifts are lavishly wrapped and stacked under the tree; families are dressed in their finest. All of these rituals are ingrained parts of our culture, and there is nothing wrong with them. It's when families forget the spirit of the season— when we get caught up in having the most lit-up house on the street, or finding the biggest Christmas tree— that we need to take a step back and refocus. Mary and Joseph didn't insist on the finest inn to bring the Savior into the world. A dirty manger filled with smelly animals and shepherds fresh from the field are all they got, and they were grateful for it. If that

was good enough for the Son of God, then maybe we can make do with one less lawn ornament. Instead, spend time this holiday season to help those less fortunate (a humbling experience), and pray together as a family. A great way for families to keep their focus is to build an Advent wreath at the **Strong Catholic Families Advent event on Sunday, November 30th after the 8:00 and 10:30 masses.** The Charity and Service article also has ideas for families as well.



## Mission Statement

The Strong Catholic Families initiative at St. Francis will provide support to help families pass on the traditions of the faith and share the love of Christ.

For more information visit: <http://www.stfrancissherwood.org/>  
(Go to: Faith Formation then Strong Catholic Families)



# WORD SEARCH

## FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS

J	E	R	U	S	A	L	E	M	H	R	G	S	X	B
G	O	O	D	N	E	W	S	T	H	U	A	J	Q	R
L	R	H	G	R	Z	I	Y	N	T	O	B	E	F	E
A	J	E	N	D	E	J	R	E	A	I	R	R	P	C
I	L	X	A	T	C	M	A	V	E	V	I	E	R	O
T	Z	J	Z	F	H	R	M	D	R	A	E	M	O	N
N	E	O	A	I	A	E	E	A	W	S	L	I	P	C
E	C	S	R	S	R	L	B	P	N	V	K	A	H	I
T	I	E	E	R	I	I	E	A	E	U	I	H	E	L
I	O	P	T	A	A	Z	L	V	P	N	E	M	T	I
N	J	H	H	E	H	A	I	I	U	T	T	L	Z	A
E	E	C	X	L	V	B	E	R	R	I	I	I	E	T
P	R	E	P	A	R	E	V	G	P	R	O	S	N	I
R	A	S	E	A	C	T	E	I	L	N	O	Z	T	O
F	I	S	A	I	A	H	A	N	E	H	J	Z	R	N

**Advent**  
**Angel**  
**Believe**  
**Caesar**  
**Elizabeth**  
**Emmanuel**  
**Gabriel**  
**Good News**  
**Hosea**  
**Isaiah**  
**Israel**  
**Jeremiah**  
**Jerusalem**  
**John The Baptist**  
**Joseph**  
**Mary**  
**Nazareth**  
**Penitential**  
**Prepare**  
**Prophet**  
**Purple**  
**Reconciliation**  
**Rejoice**  
**Repent**  
**Saviour**  
**Virgin**  
**Wreath**  
**Zechariah**  
**Zion**