



TO TEACH AS JESUS DID

DECEMBER 2016

Sacred Space

Lord, in this holy season of prayer and song and laughter, we praise you for the great wonders you have sent us: for shining star and angel's song, for infant's cry in lowly manger. We praise you for the Word made flesh in a little Child. We behold his glory, and are bathed in its radiance. Be with us as we sing the ironies of Christmas, the incomprehensible comprehended, the poetry made hard fact, the helpless Babe who cracks the world asunder. We kneel before you shepherds, innkeepers, and wise men. Help us to rise bigger than we are. Amen.
<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=345>



For Your Formation:

Praying Your Way through Advent

Advent is such a busy time of year, especially for our teachers and those who volunteer in faith formation programs. It can best be spent in prayer. Note these suggested prayers for a variety of situations during this hectic time of year. I really like *Prayer While Wrapping Gifts* or *Halfway through Advent-Have I Missed It Yet?* These prayers are perfect for the very busy FFL or Catholic School Principal, but why not send home this link to your very hurried parents preparing for Christmas? Use them or create prayers from your own heart to meet your Advent needs. Just pray and pray always.

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Advent/advent-prayers.html#Sunrise>

This is the Year for A Jesse Tree

Jesse was the father of the great King David of the Old Testament. He is often looked upon as the first person in the genealogy of Jesus. In Church art, a design developed showing the relationship of Jesus with Jesse and other biblical personages. This design showed a branched tree growing from a reclining figure of Jesse. The various branches had pictures of other Old and New Testament figures who were ancestors of Jesus. At the top of the tree were figures of Mary and Jesus. It will take pre-planning and work for a teacher or catechist to make a symbol for each day of December but it will be worth it!! The needed materials are usually found around most homes. A Biblical quote should accompany every symbol put on the tree. The tree itself can be one of several types. A small artificial tree works fine, as does a tree branch. Or a large fir tree cut from felt or heavy poster board when decorated becomes a Bible based Christmas tree.

To make an ornament, first read the Scripture verses for the day. Then pick out one or two short verses that give the main idea. Copy these verses on the back of the ornament. By this time you will probably be thinking of various ways to illustrate your Scripture verses. Use lots of creativity in making your ornament! You can use pictures from magazines or old greeting cards. Or draw pictures or symbols yourself.

Color them with crayons, pencils, markers or paint. Look around the house for bits and pieces that will make your design beautiful! For a list of scriptures to use and suggestion for symbols to illustrate this passage go to: <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=545>



From the Education Resource Center (ERC): *Speed Sketch Bible Stories: The Story of Advent*

(Order: DV #31489) is a new DVD in the ERC. To captivate the attention of students (and adults!), each of four stories is taken straight from the Bible and is rapidly sketched while recounting the story two ways: one presentation uses a narrated paraphrase and another directly quotes from the NIV translation of the Bible. Stories featured are Isaiah's Vision, The Magi, The Annunciation, and Jesus' Birth. (35 minutes total for the four stories, includes Spanish language tracks, works well with multiple-age gatherings) Be sure to check out the Archdiocese of Dubuque Pinterest Profile for Boards on Advent, Christmas, the Liturgical Calendar and more!

<https://www.pinterest.com/dbqarch/>



Saint of Month: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas Feast Day in the USA - December 12th

The opening of the New World brought with it both fortune-seekers and religious preachers seeking to convert the native populations to the Christian faith. One of the converts was a poor Aztec Indian named Juan Diego. On one of his trips to the chapel, Juan was walking through the Tepayac hill country in central Mexico. Near Tepayac Hill he encountered a beautiful woman surrounded by a ball of light as bright as the sun. Speaking in his native tongue, the beautiful lady identified herself:

"My dear little son, I love you. I desire you to know who I am. I am the ever-virgin Mary, Mother of the true God who gives life and maintains its existence. He created all things. He is in all places. He is Lord of Heaven and Earth. I desire a church in this place where your people may experience my compassion." After several visits to the bishop of the area, Diego told his story again and opened his cape letting flowers cascade out. But it wasn't the beautiful roses in the middle of winter that caused the bishop and his advisors to fall to their knees; for there, on the cape or tilma, was a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary precisely as Juan had described her. A cathedral was built at the site where the tilma is housed. <http://www.catholic.org/about/guadalupe.php>



Blessings of the Christmas Manger

Be sure to use this blessing of the crèche in your classroom, school or when praying with religious education kids.

All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:
Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. Who made heaven and earth.

One of those present or the leader reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example, **Luke 2:1** (lines 1-8) or **Isaiah 7:10** (lines 10-15, the birth of Emmanuel).

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

R/. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The leader prays with hands joined:
God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
You have made manifest your love:
when our need for a Savior was great
You sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.
To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy,
and love.

Lord, bless all who look upon this manger.

May it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and
raise our thoughts to him, who is God-with-us and
Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and
ever.

R/. Amen.

—From *Catholic Household Blessings
and Prayers*



The Gift of Christmas Wishes

It simply is not possible to give a gift to every student a teacher or catechist teaches but you can give the gift of the meaning of Christmas. Make or buy very small boxes.

The boxes are inexpensive at a hobby stores or Wal-Mart. You can wrap them or simply tie a bow. In each box, add a wish. The students will think about the wish and perhaps, just perhaps pay it forward.

-May Jesus shower His abundant blessing on you!

-May you experience lots of love, laughter and joy this Christmas and beyond.

-Let the love of the Christ Child come into your heart.

- May your life be filled with love, compassion, tolerance, peace and happiness.

-May the Blessings of Peace, the Beauty of Hope, and the Spirit of Love enter your heart.

May Faith in the Christ Child and Joy in His coming be your gifts this Christmas Season.

-The love of the Holy Family be with you this Christmas!



Middle and High School Students Need to Experience Advent in Prayer

Loyola Press offers a great online Advent lesson for middle school kids. It could easily be used with high school students as well. Students will learn various images used by the Jewish people to symbolize the coming of the Messiah, show an understanding of the different ways our celebration of Advent can express Christian hope, and pray the O Antiphons. This could be done with several classes or grades at the same time in a FF Program or even as an Advent prayer service in a Catholic middle school or high school.

Go to: <http://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/advent/activities/advent-lesson-plan-junior-high>