

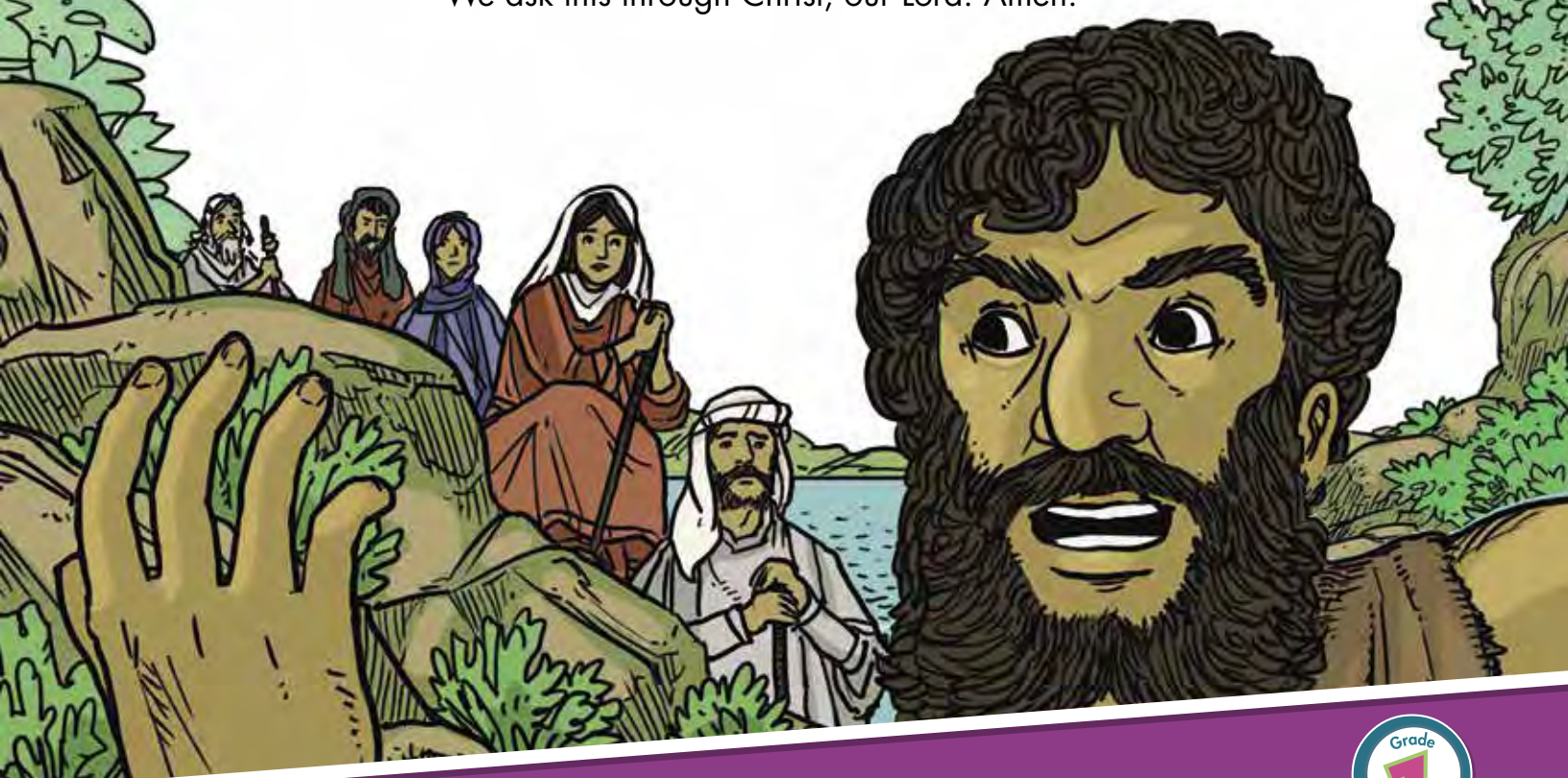


Preparing for Jesus


Mark 1:4-8


Prayer


Loving God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to show us the way to you. Help us to follow your way every day and to grow closer to you this Advent season. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.





Color the picture below using the correct color for each number listed. Find the name of the person who helped prepare God's people for Jesus.


1 = 

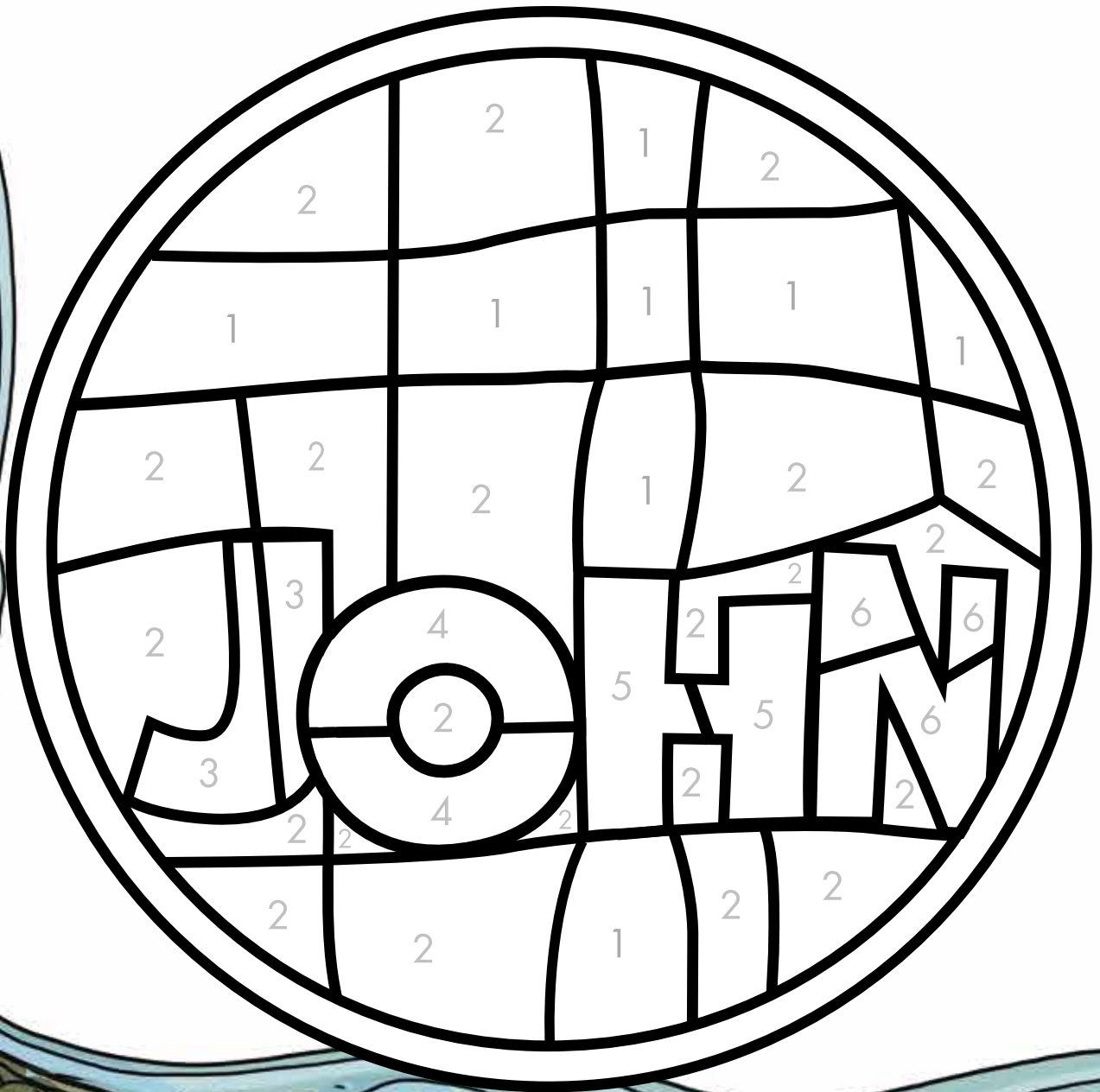
3 = 

5 = 

2 = 

4 = 

6 = 





A Soft
Welcome
for **Baby Jesus**

Leader: Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are truly God and truly human. More than two thousand years ago, you came into the world as a tiny baby.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: As we prepare to welcome you at Christmas, we offer you all of our good actions throughout this Advent.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: We offer you our lives, our hearts, and everything you have given to us.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: We will look for your presence in our world and in one another.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: We will welcome you with every kind action we do for one another.

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Family Page

Background Reflection

Anyone who has ever helped prepare to welcome a new baby into a family already has some sense of what Advent can mean to us. The sacrifices we make, as we prepare space in our homes and hearts for this new member of our family, are made with excitement and anticipation. In a similar way, when we choose to take on sacrifices or penances as part of our Advent practice, we make room for the love of Jesus in our lives.

Sacrifice and *penance* are really shorthand terms for “loving.” Love means going beyond ourselves to care for the good of another. Learning to love is a lifelong task. We practice this task more mindfully in Advent. As adults, we too can learn from the practice of placing straw into the manger to prepare “a soft bed” for Jesus, marking our acts of love (or penance, or sacrifice). Sharing this practice with our child helps us to realize that even our smallest acts of love have infinite value in the eyes of Jesus.

Family Activities

- Write the names of each family member on slips of paper, and place the slips into a bag, bowl, or basket. Each person draws the name of a family member, who then becomes their “*Christkindl*,” or “Christ Child,” for the season of Advent. Each person has the challenge to do one kind action for their *Christkindl* per day.
- Set aside time to talk with your child about waiting. Ask her or him if it is hard or easy to wait for good things to happen. Share one or two ideas that you use for yourself when you are trying to wait patiently.
- Watch the video “Tell Me the Story: John the Baptist” (YouTube, 2:23) together. Explain that John the Baptist helped the people get ready for Jesus. As a family, discuss ways you are getting ready for Jesus and sharing God’s love this Advent.



People of Faith

The Immaculate Conception of Mary

God kept Mary free from sin before she was born so that she could be the mother of Jesus. The angel Gabriel called Mary “full of grace” because she never sinned. We celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

Lord Jesus, we look forward to welcoming you at Christmas with excitement and joy. Help us to act with patience and kindness this Advent. We ask this in your name. Amen.



Discover!

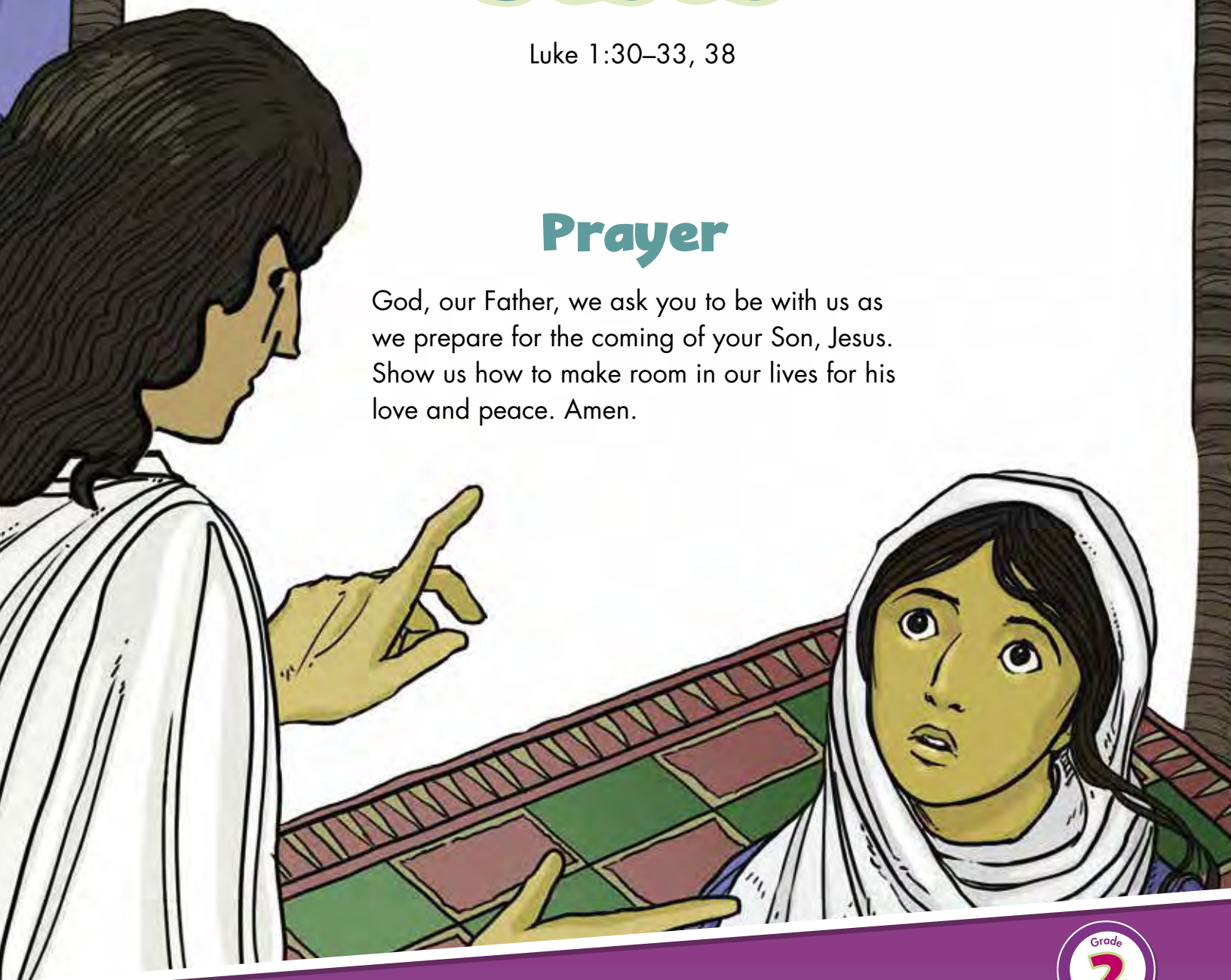
Finding Faith in Life

Welcoming Jesus

Luke 1:30–33, 38

Prayer

God, our Father, we ask you to be with us as we prepare for the coming of your Son, Jesus. Show us how to make room in our lives for his love and peace. Amen.



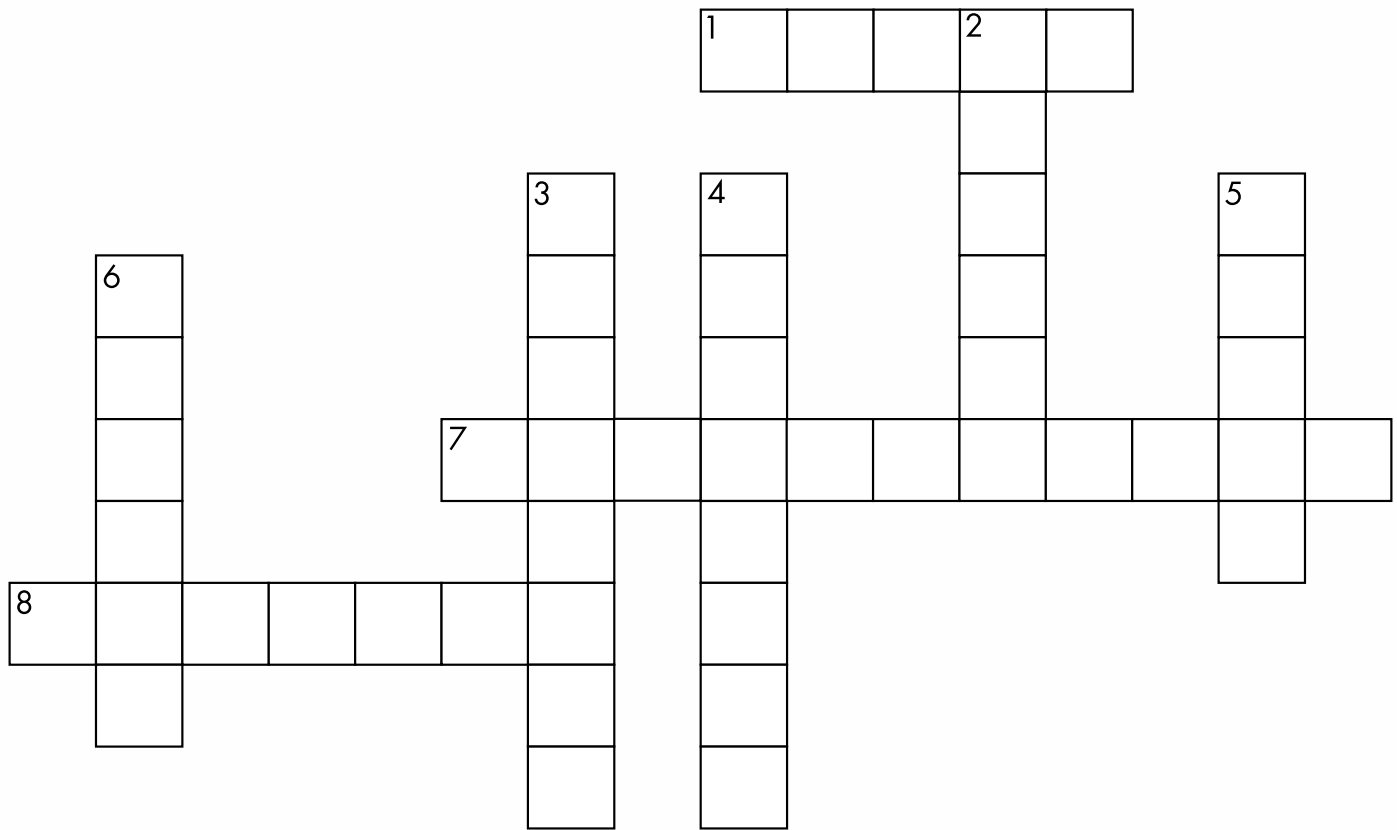
Use the Featured Story on page 1574 of *The Catholic Children's Bible* (Luke 1:30–33, 38) to solve the clues to the crossword below and learn more about the angel's message.

gracious
great

birth
ancestor

happen
servant

afraid
descendants



Down

- 2. He asked Mary not to be _____.
- 3. Mary's Son would be a king, as his _____ David was.
- 4. The angel told Mary that God had been _____ to her.
- 5. The angel told Mary that she would give _____ to a Son.
- 6. Mary agreed that everything should _____ to her as the angel had said.

Across

- 1. Mary's Son would be _____ and would be called the Son of God.
- 7. Mary's Son would be king of the _____ of Jacob forever.
- 8. Mary agreed that she was the Lord's _____.



Leader: Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross. Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Leader: Loving God, heavenly Father, you sent your angel to Mary.

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: The Angel Gabriel gave her the Good News that she would give birth to your Son, our Savior.

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: We celebrate this Good News during Advent, and we look forward to celebrating Jesus' birth this Christmas.

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: We light [this candle / these candles] as a sign of peace [hope, joy, love].

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: Jesus is the light of the world. May he light our way in Advent and throughout our lives.

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

Leader: We ask this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Family Page

Background Reflection

Advent is a time of preparing for the coming of Jesus. The word *Advent* comes from a Latin root meaning “to arrive” or “to come toward.” When we prepare for something, we walk toward it. We think ahead and make plans. We gather courage and hope, and we look forward to the joy the big event will bring.

All year long, we celebrate and try to follow Mary’s example in saying yes to God as we walk toward him throughout our lives. During Advent, we prepare to welcome him in a more intense, more immediate way. Let us pray that, like Mary, we will be ready to accept with peace whatever God asks of us.

Family Activities

- Read together the Featured Story on page 1574 in *The Catholic Children’s Bible* (Luke 1:30–33, 38). Talk about what Mary may have felt when she heard Gabriel’s news. Talk about what it is like to know that a baby is on the way.
- Brainstorm with your child to create a list of ways your family can say “yes” to God more often. Examples might include going to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation together, beginning a habit of family prayer, or practicing more patient behavior with one another at home.
- Watch the video “Light the Advent Candle” (YouTube, 2:26) together. Talk about your family’s existing Advent wreath, or make plans to set up a new one. Rather than purchasing a new wreath, create a simple homemade wreath from craft supplies and recycled items you may already have.

People of Faith

Our Lady of Guadalupe (1531)

Mary appeared to a Mexican farmer named Juan Diego. She dressed as a Mexican woman and spoke in the local language. Mary asked for a church to be built in her honor for the people of Mexico. We celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

Loving God, you sent the Angel Gabriel to deliver your message to Mary. You send messages to us too. Help us listen for your voice and say “yes” to what you ask. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.






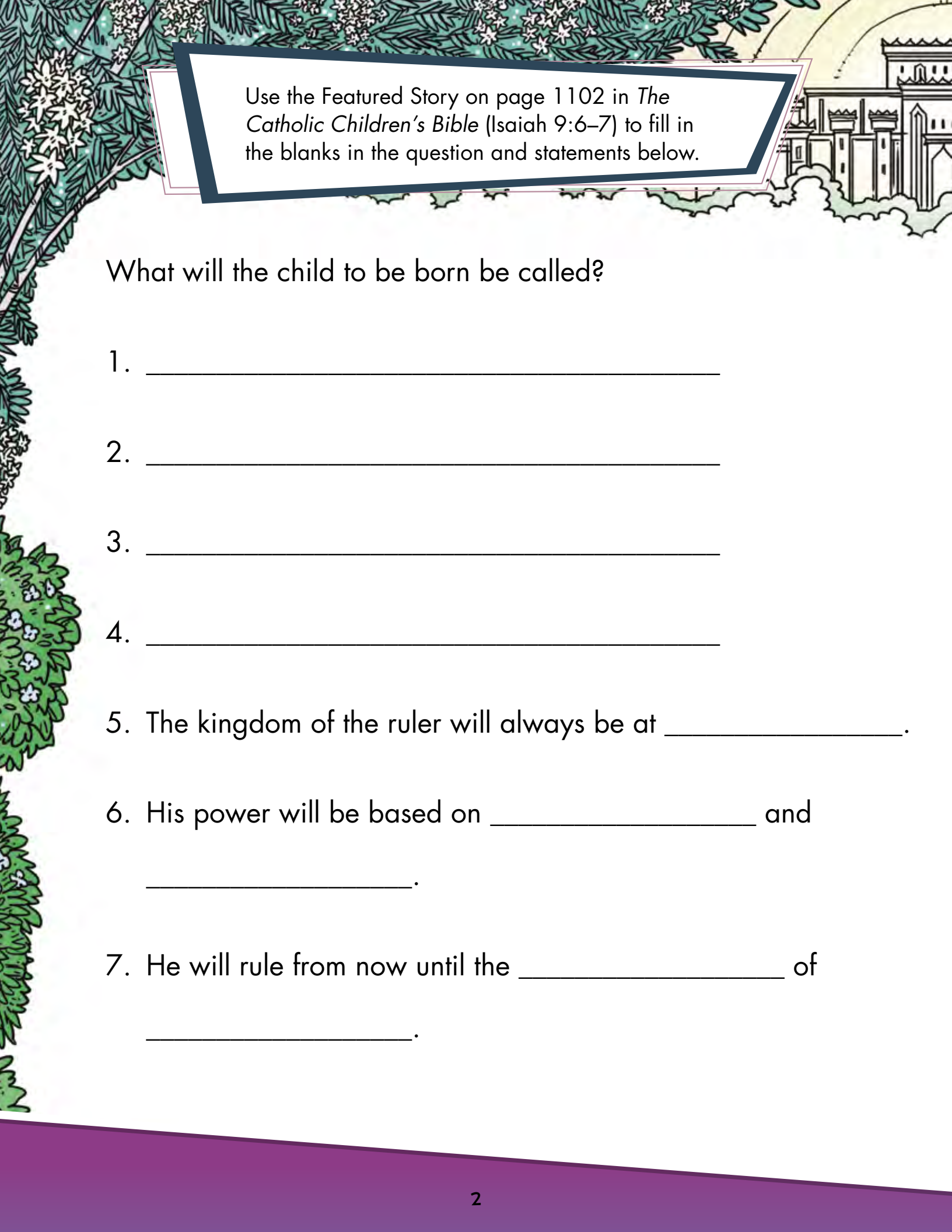
The King Is Coming

Isaiah 9:6-7

Prayer

O God, bless our homes, our families, and our friends as we prepare for Christmas. Teach us to wait in joyful hope and to be kind to one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.





Use the Featured Story on page 1102 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (Isaiah 9:6-7) to fill in the blanks in the question and statements below.

What will the child to be born be called?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. The kingdom of the ruler will always be at _____.

6. His power will be based on _____ and
_____.

7. He will rule from now until the _____ of
_____.



Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross. . . . Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Leader: Let us sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

All: O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Leader: Dear God, we are getting ready to celebrate the birthday of your Son, Jesus. We ask your help to prepare our hearts for his coming. Fill us with joy. Come, Lord Jesus!

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

Leader: Bless us with patience to wait as the people of Israel waited for their promised king. Come, Lord Jesus!

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

Leader: Bless our Advent wreaths and help us to reach out to those who need our help. Come, Lord Jesus!

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

Leader: Help us to make this world a better place by the light we bring into it. Come, Lord Jesus!

All: Come, Lord Jesus, come soon!

Family Page

Background Reflection

In the midst of busy Christmas preparations, the season of Advent calls us to a different preparation—one of reflection, excitement, and growing joy! Waiting for Christmas can be difficult for the best of us, and it can be even harder for children. The first Advent wreaths and calendars were an attempt to help children to count the passing days, to focus their impatience, and to build anticipation and joy. These traditional practices also help adults to focus our longing and place our hope on the coming of the Messiah, in Bethlehem, in our lives now, and at the end of time.

The people of Israel were also impatient, enduring years of hardship and exile. The prophet Isaiah promised a great king and named him Prince of Peace, Eternal Father, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God. What do we name that king? We name him Jesus! The birth of a king in an obscure, small, and humble place was not at all expected. So we are reminded that greatness often hides in the ordinary fabric of our lives and in the hidden corners of our world. The King of Kings is Emmanuel: God with us.

Family Activities

- Start making a paper chain with red and green construction paper strips to decorate your tree or a doorway. Cut out twenty-four strips of paper, about 6 inches long, for December 1–24. Each day, connect a new strip of paper to the chain. Use this time to talk about how you can make Advent a special time of preparation for Christmas.
- Decorate a can or jar. Write “Advent Pennies” on a label and attach it to the can or jar. Collect pennies and loose change to donate to a charity.
- View the video “Advent in 2 Minutes (NEW!)” (YouTube, 2:09) together. Discuss what your child saw in the video and any points that were new for her or him. Make a commitment to celebrate Advent in a new way this year.

People of Faith

Saint Lucy (c. 283–304)

Saint Lucy was a young woman who chose to die rather than give up her faith. Her life was a witness to the light of Christ and his love. Lucy means “light”. Saint Lucy’s feast day is December 13, and is often celebrated by lighting candles and sharing a sweet Saint Lucy bread.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

Loving God, in this season of Advent, help us grow in love and fill our hearts with peace. As we prepare to celebrate your coming into the world, let us be grateful for all our gifts and especially for the gift of Jesus. Amen.





A King of Peace

Isaiah 11:6-9

Prayer

Lord Jesus, fill our hearts with joy as we prepare and wait for you to come at Christmas. And so we pray: Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.



Reread the Featured Story on page 1106 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* (Isaiah 11:6–9) and match the "animal partners."

wolves

bear cubs

leopards

young goats

calves

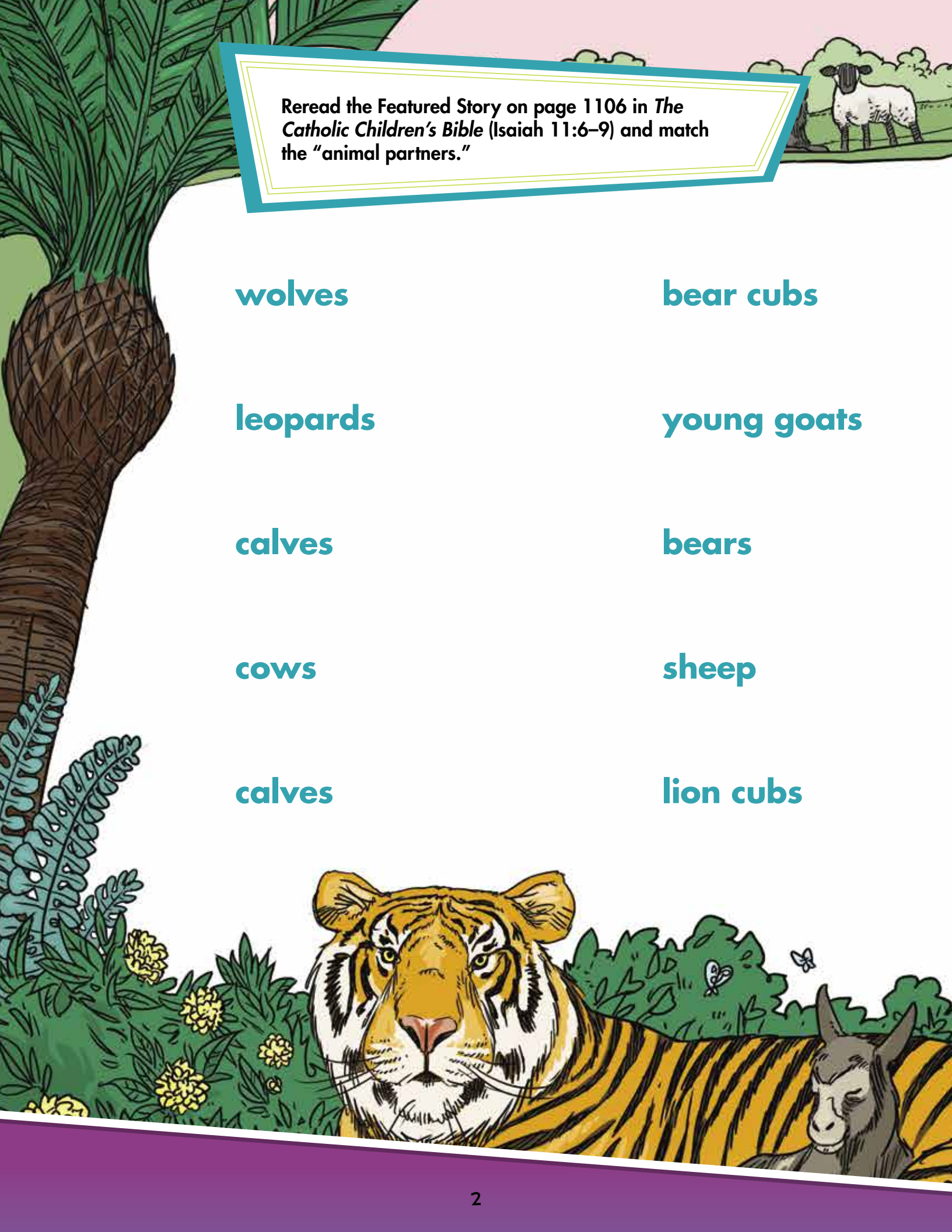
bears

cows

sheep

calves

lion cubs





Advent Light

Leader: Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross. . . . Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Leader: Jesus, during this season of Advent, we remember your birth in Bethlehem. Let us think of your willingness to be born as a helpless baby. May we trust in you when we feel unsure and weak.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord.

Leader: Jesus, during this season of Advent, we invite you to enter our hearts and lives with your peace and joy. May we trust in you when we feel alone and distracted.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord.

Leader: Jesus, during this season of Advent, we know you will come again at the end of time. May we trust in you when we feel anxious and afraid.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord.

Leader: Lord Jesus, during this season of Advent, help us be part of your Kingdom of Peace by bringing peace and joy to others.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord.

Leader: Lord Jesus, during this season of Advent, help us prepare to receive you into our hearts at Christmas, especially when we receive you in Holy Communion.

All: Come into our hearts, Lord.

Leader: We ask all of this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Family Page

Background Reflection

The liturgical season of Advent is often a hurried precursor to the celebration of Christmas. We find it easy to focus on the birth of Jesus, but it's important to remember that the Church takes four weeks before Christmas to slow down and prepare.

The word *advent* comes from the Latin word for *coming*. In Advent, we prepare for Christ's coming in the historical event of Christmas, we prepare for his coming at the end of time, and we prepare for his coming into our hearts at Christmas, especially by receiving Holy Communion on that great feast.

This lesson focuses on pausing in prayer as we prepare for Christmas. You may invite your child to participate in traditional Advent customs like lighting an Advent wreath and serving others as Jesus came to serve us. And you can also remind her or him of Isaiah's promise of Jesus and his peaceful kingdom in the Old Testament. In these ways, your child can learn that Advent is a special season all its own.

Family Activities

- Pray the "Prayer of Saint Francis" found on page 1107 in *The Catholic Children's Bible*. Talk as a family about ways you can be instruments of God's peace this Advent.
- Go for a family drive to look at the Christmas lights in your neighborhood. Talk about the beauty and joy that Christmas lights bring, and then compare the lights to Jesus, the light of the world. Discuss how your family can be a light for others this season.
- Watch the video "Advent in 2 Minutes (NEW!)" (YouTube, 2:09) together. Pause the video as needed to process the different points it makes. Then talk about the ways Advent is different from Christmas. Finally, name some ways your child can use Advent to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

People of Faith

Saint John the Baptist (first century)

Saint John announced Jesus' coming. He is called a prophet because he spoke God's Word. John baptized people who wanted to change their hearts, and he encouraged them to follow Jesus, not himself. John was Jesus' cousin, and he was born six months before Jesus. The Church celebrates the birthday of John the Baptist on June 24, six months before Christmas Eve.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

Dear Jesus, during Advent, may your words remain in our hearts so that we may fill our lives with generosity and compassion. We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.





Discover!

Finding Faith in Life

Preparing for Jesus

Luke 1:39-56

Understand It!

When the angel announced the Good News to Mary, that she had been chosen to be the Mother of God, he also told her that her relative Elizabeth was also pregnant. Elizabeth was older and so, as soon as she could, Mary went to visit her. How happy they were to see each other and to share together their good news!

When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy. That child was John the Baptist, the prophet who would one day baptize his cousin Jesus as he began his mission in the world. Elizabeth calls Mary "the mother of the Lord," and so she is. In this moment of happiness, Mary sang a song of praise.

The Church joins Mary in her song of praise because of all God's wonderful works, especially his giving us his Son, Jesus. We have so many reasons to praise God!

Live It!

We all have reasons for praising God. What are some of yours? On a separate piece of paper, write them down. Then fold the paper and keep it in a safe place. When you get discouraged or sad, take out this "paper of praise" to remind yourself of God's goodness to you.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are Emmanuel, God with us. Thank you for coming to live among us. Help us to prepare to celebrate your birth at Christmas with peaceful and loving hearts. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.



Find the names below in this word find. Words may be found running horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Mary

Elizabeth

Zechariah

Abraham

Jesus

John

Gabriel

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

My  praises
the Lord;
my soul is glad
because of
God my Savior.



Luke 1:46



A Circle of Love and Light

Leader: Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross. Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.

Leader: We are gathered around the Advent wreath to help us prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Each candle counts one week of this beautiful season of Advent. This week, as we gather around the wreath, let us pray:

Reader: Jesus, you are the light of peace. Be with us this week. Help us be peaceful. Bring peace to our families, our community, and our world.

All: Amen.

Reader: Jesus, you are the light of love. Be with us this week. Help us to be loving to all we meet, whether friend or stranger. Bring love to our families, our community, and our world.

All: Amen.

Reader: Jesus, you are the light of joy. Be with us this week. Help us to be joyful. Bring joy to our families, our community, and our world.

All: Amen.

Reader: Jesus, you are the light of faith and hope. Be with us this week. Help us to hope in you as our Savior. Bring faith and hope to our families, our community, and our world.

All: Amen.

Leader: We are gathered in a circle around the circle of the Advent wreath. A circle is a sign of God's love, a love that has no beginning and no end. Let us pray quietly for our families and friends. Let us bring them into our circle of prayer. Let us think of those who are poor and in need. Let us bring them into our circle of prayer. Let our circle of prayer include the whole world as we place ourselves today in the circle of God's love and light. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Family Page

Background Reflection

The season of Advent evokes deep feelings, reaching into our memories and touching our lives in a personal and spiritual way. The symbols of the season—the Advent wreath, the candles, the carols, and other preparation for Christmas, all with their own familiar memories—involve us in this season in a most personal way.

Yet, in the life of the Church, the personal becomes communal as we experience this preparatory season together. We are not solitary pilgrims. We travel in a caravan of pilgrims as we pray together, sing together (“O Come Emmanuel!”), and prepare to welcome Jesus into our hearts yet again, together.

Let us join Mary in praise and thanksgiving, in wonder and awe. Let us join her in the Bethlehem of our own hearts, that hidden place in which the God who made the universe has chosen to dwell.

Family Activities

- Create an Advent atmosphere at home with an Advent wreath and Advent calendar. Use the wreath as a centerpiece at the family table, and light it when the family gathers for meals. Parents and children can take turns opening the windows on the Advent calendar.
- Choose a family “Advent Gift” to give to those who are poor. Support a toy drive or food drive as a family, or send a family contribution to a national or international aid group, like Catholic Relief Services. Encourage your fifth grader to contribute part of his or her allowance or piggy-bank savings to this effort.
- Read together the Scripture passage for this week’s lesson (Luke 1:39–56). Invite your child to tell you what he or she remembers about the meaning of Mary’s Song of Praise. Select a few verses that appeal to your child, and discuss them together.

People of Faith

Saint Elizabeth (first century)

Saint Elizabeth was the cousin of Mary, the mother of God. Elizabeth was an older woman, but the angel Gabriel revealed that she would have a son who would prepare people for the Lord. (That son was John the Baptist.) When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth realized that the Mother of the Lord had come to see her! Elizabeth glorified God and raised John to love God and care for God’s people. The Church celebrates Saint Elizabeth on November 5.

Prayer

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

With the entire Church around the world we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!” Help us celebrate your birth among us with faith and hope, peace, and love. We ask this in your name. Amen.



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