

Journey of Faith

for Advent and Christmas

In the winter, the trees are asleep,
Ghosts of their former selves.
And the snow falls and softly
Blankets them with white.

And I thank you, God, for the
Quiet beauty of winter.

In the spring, the trees awaken
And shake off their white winter blanket.
New leaves appear,
And the winter, black and white,
Dissolves into the bright, cheerful noise
Of spring.

And I thank you, God, for the
New, emerging beauty of spring.

In the summer, the trees
Reach their leaves to the sky in praise.
They sway in gentle breezes
And shade the ground in shadows.

And I thank you, God, for the
Sparkling, sunlit beauty of summer.

In the autumn, the trees turn
Bright yellow and orange and scarlet.
The leaves say their good-byes in
Seas of color, then
Blanket the ground like the snow to come.

And I thank you, God, for the
Brilliant beauty of fall.

For all the seasons and all the days,
I thank you, God, in so many ways.

(Sarah Cannon, in *You Give Me the Sun*, pages 10–11)

Journey of Faith for Advent and Christmas

by Mary Shrader with Therese Brown and Tony Tamberino



Genuine recycled paper with 10% post-consumer waste. 5103100

The publishing team included Barbara A. Murray and Laurie Delgatto, development editors; Lorraine Kilmartin, reviewer; Mary Koehler, permissions editor; prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the prepublication and production services departments of Saint Mary's Press.

Images © 2005 FaithClipart.com

The scriptural quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1993 and 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

The prayer by Sarah Cannon on page 1 is from *You Give Me the Sun: Biblical Prayers by Teenagers*, edited by Carl Koch (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000), pages 10–11. Copyright © 2000 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.

The "Advent Wreath Blessing" activity on pages 6–7 and the blessings on pages 11, 13, 17, 22, and 34 are from or are adapted from *Ministry Ideas for Advent and Christmas*, by Janet Claussen and Marilyn Kielbasa (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2005, pages 17–21 and 85.). Copyright © 2005 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.

The prayer "Angelus" on page 21 is from *A Book of Prayers* by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). English translation copyright © 1982 by ICEL. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

During this book's preparation, all citations, facts, figures, names, addresses, telephone numbers, Internet URLs, and other pieces of information cited within were verified for accuracy. The authors and Saint Mary's Press staff have made every attempt to reference current and valid sources, but we cannot guarantee the content of any source, and we are not responsible for any changes that may have occurred since our verification. If you find an error in, or have a question or concern about, any of the information or sources listed within, please contact Saint Mary's Press.

Copyright © 2005 by Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1318, www.smp.org. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Printing: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year: 2013 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05

ISBN 0-88489-881-4

Journey of Faith series

Journey of Faith for Advent and Christmas:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Lent:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Easter and Pentecost:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Journey of Faith for Ordinary Time:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Pray It! Study It! Live It![®] resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1 Have an Advent Attitude!	6
Chapter 2 Are You Ready?	11
Chapter 3 Halfway Home	13
Chapter 4 Joy, Anticipation, Journey, Plan	16
Chapter 5 Let Christmas Speak for Itself	22
Chapter 6 Feast of the Holy Family	23
Chapter 7 All Are Welcome	30
Chapter 8 Baptism of the Lord	33
Chapter 9 Light for the World: Extended Activities	36

Introduction

Each year the earth goes through four seasons. Different parts of the country and of the world experience the seasons in various ways. In general,

winter is a time of cooler weather;

spring, a time of new growth;

summer, a time of warmer weather;

and fall, a time of change.

Our lives are full of still more cycles, and the school year is a main cycle in your life right now. Each year has time for newness and for change. There is time for routines such as reading, studying, and participating in extracurricular activities. Not-so-ordinary events—big tests or exams and the beginning and ending of the school year—also have time.

January
December

The Church also revolves around a calendar, much like the seasons, the school year, and the twelve months from January to December. This cycle of Church seasons is called the *liturgical year*, and its purpose is to mark the celebration of the Church's liturgies. The Church calendar begins with Advent (usually near the first week-end of December) and ends just before Advent begins again (usually near Thanksgiving time).

The liturgical year is built around important historical events—such as

Jesus's birth, death, and Resurrection—
in which God's saving power was made real. The liturgies in the liturgical year help us remember God's saving power made real in those historical events.

The Church's calendar includes times designated as ordinary—not surprisingly, these are called **Ordinary Time**. The liturgies celebrated during Ordinary Time include stories and practices that are good for us to routinely pay attention to. The Church calendar also includes special, or not-so-ordinary, times such as **Lent, Easter, Advent,** and **Christmas.**

In this book, we will take a closer look at the seasons of *Advent* and **CHRISTMAS.**

Now, take one minute to write down any words that come to mind when you hear the word *Advent*. If you don't feel that you know much about Advent, write down something you have heard someone else say about Advent, or write down some questions you have about Advent that you might hope to have answered in this book.

Advent is celebrated during the four weeks before **CHRISTMAS.**

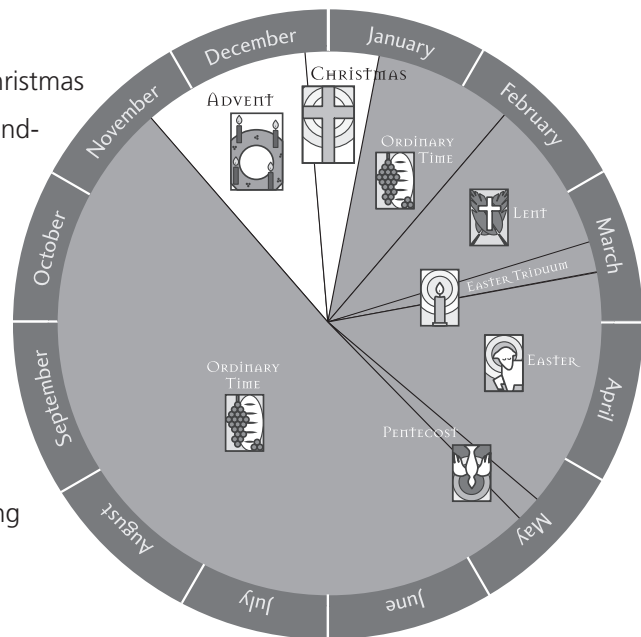
Those four weeks give Christians an opportunity to take time to reflect on the meaning of the Christmas season. It sure is easy to get wrapped up in worrying about the presents you are wishing for or when school will let out for break. But in the midst of life's hustle and bustle, Advent gives us a chance to be

peaceful, calm, patient, and hopeful.

Advent offers us a chance to practice thinking about other people. Advent is a great time to think about gifts from the heart, not necessarily from the mall.

This book in the Journey of Faith series will be your companion as you journey through the Advent and Christmas seasons. During this time, you will be reminded of two important journeys: Mary and Joseph's to Bethlehem and the Magis' (three kings) to visit Mary and Joseph after Jesus was born. Their journeys remind us that God is always with us, always guiding us, and always caring about us. That God is always with us is the most important thing to remember as you journey through the seasons.

For each week of the Advent and Christmas seasons, this workbook has corresponding activities that include Scripture **readings**, reflection and discussion **questions**, **ideas** to think about, and **topics** to discuss with your fellow faith-sharers, friends, and family members. In addition, this workbook has open spaces for writing your own thoughts or for drawing.



Chapter 1

Have an Advent Attitude!

At times, some of us may be criticized for having an attitude—a feeling, an approach, or a perspective on any given subject. But Christians should have certain attitudes. Advent calls Christians to be joyful, patient, willing, prayerful, and intentional. Advent also includes an opportunity to reflect on our sinfulness so that we can be ready to accept the gift of the birth of Christ into our lives.

Because the Advent season occurs year after year, we have the opportunity each year for renewal, a time to readjust our attitudes. We remember not only how people welcomed Jesus two thousand years ago, but we recall, once again, that Christ is present today. We take a cue from the Scriptures, which invite us to have an Advent attitude of awareness of God's presence in the world and in all people.

READINGS

First Sunday of Advent

- **Cycle A:** Isaiah 2:1–5; Romans 13:11–14; Matthew 24:37–44
- **Cycle B:** Isaiah 63:16–17, 19; 64:2–7; 1 Corinthians 1:3–9; Mark 13:33–37
- **Cycle C:** Jeremiah 33:14–16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2; Luke 21:25–28, 34–36

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Advent Wreath Blessing

Catholics have traditions for celebrating the liturgical seasons and the story of their faith. One of the most recognizable symbols is an Advent wreath used by churches and families during the four weeks before Christmas.

The wreath—a circle that has no beginning and no end—symbolizes the eternity of God, who always was and always will be. God is the alpha and the omega. We set the wreath in a place of honor just as we keep God in a place of honor at the center of our lives. The wreath reminds us of our own mortality and the everlasting life promised to us through Christ.

The circle shape of the wreath also reminds us that as the earth revolves around the sun and as the seasons change, so too do our lives revolve around God, from whom all life flows.

The four candles used in the Advent wreath represent the four weeks of Advent. The colors of the candles are significant. Three of the candles are purple, reminding us that Advent is a time for prayer and reflection as we prepare for Christmas. One candle is pink and represents the third Sunday of Advent, a time for anticipating the joy of Christmas as the birth of Jesus, the light of the world, draws closer. The lighting of each candle signifies our looking forward with joy and hope to the celebration of the Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of the Second Coming, when Jesus will come again in glory.

One purple candle is lit.

Some things cannot be rushed. O God of Love, as we light this candle, we pray for the grace to wait patiently. Your people waited so long for the coming of a savior. We too are anxious for the celebration of your coming. We pray to be ready and alert, always trying to live the life you want for us. We light this candle in the name of Jesus, the Christ, who comes as Light to the world. Amen.

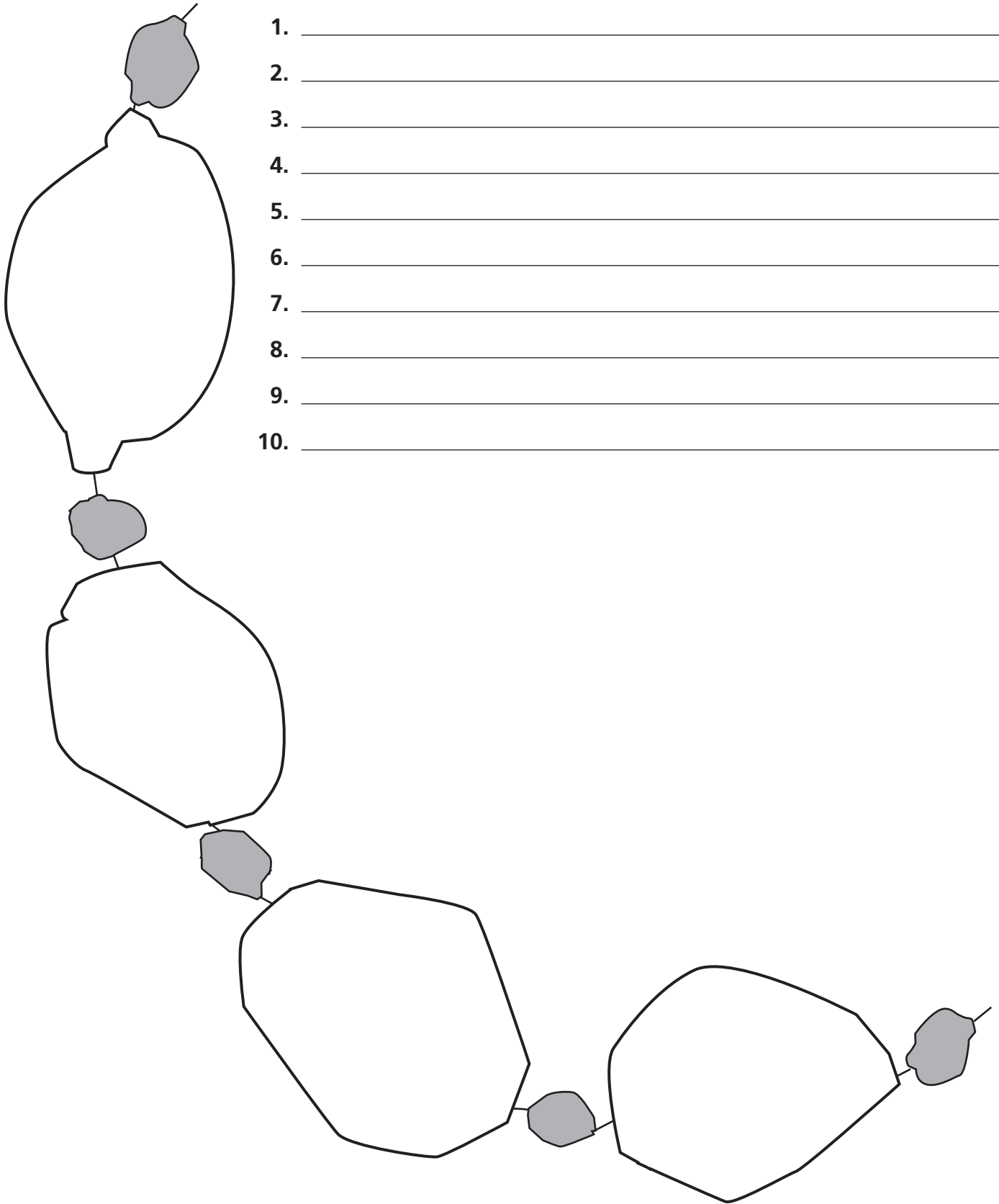
(This activity is adapted from Janet Claussen and Marilyn Kielbasa, *Ministry Ideas for Celebrating Advent and Christmas with Teens, Families, and Parishes*, pages 17–21.)

STUDY IT!

Scriptural Attitudes

Ten Practices for an Advent Attitude

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____



Watch While You Wait

Here are five things I am waiting for during Advent as Christmas approaches:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Here are three things worth waiting for and working toward at this time in my life:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Here is one thing worth waiting for in my relationship with God:

1. _____

Skills for Watching While You Wait

Write two skills you would like to practice as you learn to wait.

1. _____
2. _____

Put on Christ

Prayer for the Spirit of Christian Joy

God of joy and gladness,
look upon us as we begin this Advent time.
Open our hearts and minds to the coming of your Son.
Fill our lives with the Spirit of anticipation
so that as we prepare for Christmas,
we will know the joy of your Love.
Let peace abound and let justice flourish,
that every nation on earth
will shout with the joy that comes through Jesus,
God with us, forever and ever. Amen.

Make Me Ready, Lord

Litany of Readiness

Leader: When Jesus comes again,
All: Make me ready, Lord.
Leader: When my family challenges me,
All: Make me ready, Lord.
Leader: When my friends need me,
All: Make me ready, Lord.
Leader: When I am stressed at school,
All: Make me ready, Lord.
Leader: When I make tough decisions,
All: Make me ready, Lord.
Leader: When my faith is weak,
All: Make me ready, Lord.
Leader: When the parish asks me to use my gifts,
All: Make me ready, Lord.
Leader: When God calls me,
All: Make me ready, Lord.