

## **GENERATIONS OF FAITH *Come, Lord Jesus, Come (An Advent Small Group Activity)***

**Overview:** Advent is the special time of year during which the Catholic Church prepares for the coming of Jesus. Advent is a time of awe-filled anticipation before Christmas—a time to reflect on Jesus' first coming as we look toward his second coming.

### **Possible Topics for Consideration :**

1. Learn what liturgical colors are used during Advent and learn their significance.
2. Learn about the Advent wreath: the significance of the colors, the candles, the circle, and the evergreens.
3. Learn about Advent and pre-Christmas customs of different countries.
4. Make a family Advent calendar or use an online calendar to count down the days of Advent

**Resources/Materials:** a computer with Internet access; software (HyperStudio or PowerPoint) for multimedia presentations; a large wall calendar covering the period of Advent, with space to add text and pictures.

### **Activities/Procedures:**

Note: You may want to locate the links suggested for this activity in advance and bookmark them for the students' use.

1. Define waiting. Ask the members: What is something that you look forward to? Answers may range from birthdays, Christmas, and summer vacation to exciting trips or the arrival of special guests.
2. Have the members consider their feelings of anticipation during a period of waiting. Talk about how sometimes it feels as if the event will never happen. Ask them: Do you do anything special to help make the waiting time "go faster"? Do you mark the "big day" on a calendar and count off the days until it comes? Do you talk to other family members about special visitors and make plans for what you will do when they arrive? Relate this discussion to how the ancient Hebrews waited for the arrival of the Savior. Explain how we commemorate this time every year during the season of Advent.
3. Begin the lesson on Advent by visiting the Encarta Online Encyclopedia for a brief article on the history and significance of Advent  
[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761570774/Advent.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761570774/Advent.html). If you wish to search further in Encarta's online encyclopedia and dictionary, you can do so at Encarta's home page, at <http://encarta.msn.com>.
4. An excellent essay on the meaning of Advent and how we celebrate the season can be found online at CyberFaith [www.cyberfaith.com](http://www.cyberfaith.com). Follow the Liturgical Year link on the home page to the interactive liturgical calendar page; once there, click on the Advent icon to access an in-depth essay about the season, its themes, its colors, and its symbols. After the class has read the material on this site, discuss the following:
  - When does the season of Advent begin?
  - What does the word Advent mean?
  - What liturgical colors are used during Advent?

- What do the colors symbolize?
- What are the main liturgical themes during Advent?

5. Have the group visit [www.cptryon.org/prayer/adx/adwreath.html](http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/adx/adwreath.html) to learn about the Advent wreath, its prayers, customs, and history. (Note: This page is part of a larger site maintained by the Passionist Missionaries. You can visit the site's other Advent and Christmas pages by clicking on the links at the left-hand side of the Advent wreath page, or you can go directly to the "Prayers and Customs of Advent and Christmas" introduction at [www.cptryon.org/prayer/adx/index.html](http://www.cptryon.org/prayer/adx/index.html).)

6. People enjoy learning the holiday customs of different countries. Divide the class into small groups of two or three children each. Have each group choose a country from the Yahoo!igans Christmas Around the World Web page

[www.yahooligans.com/School\\_Bell/Social\\_Studies/Religion/Christianity/Christmas/Christmas\\_Around\\_the\\_World/](http://www.yahooligans.com/School_Bell/Social_Studies/Religion/Christianity/Christmas/Christmas_Around_the_World/).

7. Have each person follow the link to the site for its chosen country and study the customs described. Ask the students to find the answers to the following questions:

- What December or Advent customs are followed in your chosen country?
- Are there any similarities between these customs and the customs followed in the United States?
- Do the people in your chosen country prepare any special foods at this time of year?
- Are any saints' feast days celebrated in your chosen country during December? (Example: December 5, the eve of the feast of St. Nicholas, is celebrated in the Netherlands.)

8. Have each person share its findings with the rest of the group. This can be done in short presentations. Each presentation should include a title slide giving the name of the group's chosen country and a slide showing or describing some of the Advent celebrations of that country.

9. Brainstorm with the group to prepare an Advent calendar. The calendar should include activities to do together in church and at home with the family. Ask the members to suggest items to include on the calendar. Look for a variety of activities and images. These might include:

- prayers appropriate to the season (example: "Come, Lord Jesus, Come" and other simple prayers)
- Scripture passages appropriate to the season (example: Luke 1:26–38)
- images and symbols appropriate to the season (examples: pictures of seasonal saints; images of angels, wreaths, candles, and evergreens)
- suggestions for charitable activities (examples: sending cards to a nursing home or hospital, collecting canned foods for a food pantry, taking up a collection for the St. Vincent de Paul Society)
- traditional Advent activities (Christmas caroling, baking special seasonal cookies, "decking the halls" at school and at home)
- Advent customs and celebrations from around the world.

When you have chosen the images and activities to include on the calendar, enter them on the designated days and hang the calendar in a prominent place in the church.