

Sunday Session for Grade 1

December

Lesson Objective: The children will learn that Jesus is God's son who became a human like us. The children will learn that Advent, the beginning of the liturgical year, is a time of preparation for the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

- In BIG classroom - Opening Prayer
- Break into smaller classrooms and begin lesson
- Discussion of the Season of Advent
- Read and discuss the book entitled O Holy Night: The First Christmas
- Service Project: Christmas card(s)
- If time permits they can do activity pages, color sheets, review prayers etc. if you run out of time, hand out sheets for students to take home.
- Closing Prayer
- Dismissal

Discuss the Season of Advent

There will be a little handmade **Advent wreath** for each classroom. (Remind the children that they can find an Advent wreath in every Catholic Church wherever they may attend Mass during the Season of Advent.

- **Advent:** a season in the Church calendar when we pray, prepare, and “wait” for Jesus Christ; it should not be a season that we rush through!
 - *“Happy New Year, Catholic Church!”* While almost everyone around the world celebrates New Year's Day on January 1, the **First Sunday of Advent** marks the beginning of the new liturgical year in the Catholic Church!
 - Ask the children if they've ever had to “**wait**” for something special. Allow 2-3 children to share their stories.
 - **Explain:** A long, long time ago, God promised **His chosen people** (Israel) that He would send them a **Messiah** (a **Savior**) to lead them to **Heaven** (God's home). Depending upon when they were born, the early generations of believers had to wait (and pray through) hundreds—or perhaps thousands—of years before **Jesus Christ** (God's only Son, their Messiah) was born! *The Season of Advent gives us a sense of what it's like to “wait” for something that has been promised!*
 - **Reminder:** We're not waiting for Santa Claus to bring us presents!
 - During the first two weeks of Advent, we pray and prepare for the **Second Coming** of Jesus. Before He died, Jesus told His disciples that He would

someday return. He died in the year 33 A.D., so, like those early believers, we've been waiting a long time, too! We really don't know when He'll return, so our mood is a bit grim (*gloomy, sad*) at Mass during those first two weeks of Advent. *On the night before He died, Jesus shared a meal (the **Last Supper**) with His Apostles. Jesus told them that He would soon have to leave them, but He would send a **helper** or **advocate** (the **Holy Spirit**) to help them. After **resurrecting** from the dead, in a visit with His Apostles, Jesus told them that He had to leave them to be with His Father in Heaven, but He would someday return. On both occasions, they were, no doubt, confused by His remarks because He couldn't provide an explanation that they would have understood. Even today, as Catholic Christians, we celebrate **Pentecost** (when the **Holy Spirit** descended on the Apostles) and still believe that, someday, Jesus Christ will come back! (We will expound on that topic when the children are older.)*

- During the last two weeks of Advent, we pray and prepare for the anniversary of Jesus' birth. Each year, we remember and celebrate His birth on Christmas Day. *Remind the children that we are only born once! After that, we celebrate the anniversary of our birth on our birthday! **QUESTION:** How long ago was Jesus born? **ANSWER:** Jesus was born approximately [**current year**] years ago! (Although we really don't know the exact date of His birth, we remember and celebrate the anniversary of His birth on December 25.)*
- **Advent Wreath:** a circle (*representing God's unending love for us*) of green foliage, usually garland or leaves (*representing new life—God's life—within us*), three **violet** candles and one **rose-colored** (not pink) candle. **NOTE:** *In the Catholic Church, the **violet** color expresses a gloomy anticipation (waiting) or **somber** (serious) emotion. The **rose** (not pink) color expresses a sense of joy.*
- One violet candle is lit on the **First Sunday of Advent**. The priest wears a violet **chasuble**. *(A **chasuble** is an outer garment of color worn by a priest at Mass. It symbolizes the yoke of Christ and signifies charity. Refer to the finished chasuble craft in your zip lock bag to show the children an example of a chasuble.)*
- Two violet candles are lit on the **Second Sunday of Advent**. Again, the priest wears a violet chasuble.
- Two violet candles and the rose-colored candle are lit on the **Third Sunday of Advent**. On the Third Sunday of Advent, we begin to anticipate the anniversary of Jesus' birth and begin making plans to celebrate Christmas. The priest wears a rose-colored chasuble on the Third Sunday of Advent.
 - **NOTE:** *The priest will not decorate the church until a day or two before Christmas Eve! Even though lights may be strung on Christmas trees in church before that time, they will not be turned on until the Anticipated Mass on Christmas Eve.*
 - **FYI:** *Christmas is more than one day! It is an entire season! It begins with the Anticipated Mass on Christmas Eve and lasts until we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus Christ in January! We'll discuss more details about the Christmas Season in Grades 2-5.*
- Three violet (*somber, gloomy; waiting*) candle candles and the rose-colored (*joyful*) candle are lit on the **Fourth Sunday of Advent**. Once again, the priest wears a violet chasuble.
- **Activity:** If battery operated candles work, please light them to help explain the order in which the candles are lit throughout the Advent Season. If it's a construction paper

wreath, you'll be able to add and/or remove the construction paper flames into/from the top of the candles.

Read and discuss the book entitled *O Holy Night: The First Christmas*

Remind the children that the **Season of Advent** leads us into the **Christmas Season**. (It's more than just one day! It's an entire season! It begins with the anticipated Mass on Christmas Eve and lasts approximately 2½ weeks (ending on the day we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ). *(Volunteers will help decorate the church one or two days before Christmas. Even though the decorations may be up on the 4th Sunday of Advent, the tree lights will not be turned on until the Christmas Season begins—when we prepare to celebrate 4:00 anticipated Mass on Christmas Eve. By that point in time, many people have already had decorations in their home and yard since (or before) Thanksgiving. They are already tired of the decorations and will want to dismantle their decorations on or shortly after Christmas Day. **The Christmas Season has just begun!** Rather than following the schedule set by retail marketing, we should consider leaving our decorations up and lit until the end of the Christmas Season—when we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus—approximately 2½ weeks after Christmas Day.)*

- Write the word “Christmas” on the board. What is the true meaning of Christmas? *(Underline the word “Christ.”) The **Holy Day of Obligation**—and the civil holiday—should focus on the **Nativity** (meaning delivery, labor) of our Lord, Jesus Christ! *(Unfortunately, the politically correct modern world prefers that we associate the Christmas holiday with snowmen and snowflakes rather than the birth of our Savior.)**
- While (or after) reading the book, discuss these words:
 - **Archangel:** an angel sent by God to deliver a message
 - *It isn't in the book, but some children may ask about their* **Guardian Angel:** an angel assigned by God to guide and protect each one of us
 - ***Extra details about Guardian Angels:** Years ago, at one of our two-week summer programs, Fr. Bill John Melancon explained that each of us receives our soul and our guardian angel at the moment of our conception. Our guardian angel stays with us until the moment our bodies die, then they “retire” to Heaven where they offer praise, glory, and honor to God for the rest of eternity. They are never reassigned to another human being! With that thought in mind, think of all of the human beings who have lived as well as those who will be born in the future! None of us will ever share the same guardian angel! Because God created eight more categories (“choirs”) of angels, there are many more angels than people in God's creation! As a result, we do not become angels after we die! God has created all of the angels He will ever need! Instead, we are called to be saints! Whether or not other people will ever recognize our name, our soul is expected to enter Heaven as a saint, not an angel.)*
 - **Grace:** We receive God's **Grace** (His life) in our invisible *(can't be seen)*, intangible *(can't be touched)*, **soul** when we are baptized. (NOTE: We'll begin discussing the “immortal” characteristic of our soul later.) *When we do things that displease God, our sins begin to clutter our soul, leaving less room for God's Grace (life) within us. Sometimes, our souls get so cluttered with sin, that there is no room left in our soul for God. It's difficult to live a good and happy life without God's love! We must make good choices and decisions to live a life that pleases God. We don't want to kick Him out of our lives! We want our souls to be happy with Him in Heaven some day!*
 - **Savior:** Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who was born to “save” us from our sins and help our souls go to Heaven *(after our bodies die many, many years from now!)*
 - **Manger:** a trough *(gutter, trench, channel)* that holds food for animals

Service Project: Christmas Cards

NOTE: *Because these **greeting cards** will be distributed to local needy families, residents of local nursing homes, and/or priests and seminarians in the diocese, **students will sign only their first name on each card!** We will dispose of all cards that have first and last names!*

For the remainder of today's class, your students will prepare "**Christmas Cards**" for local needy families, residents of local nursing homes or, perhaps, for priests and seminarians in our diocese. Distribute the color sheets. *(See two samples at the end of this lesson plan.* Allow your students to color one or two pictures. Rather than rushing to complete both cards, encourage them to do a really good job for the recipients of the greeting cards. While they color, invite the entire class to recite **The Lord's Prayer**, **Hail Mary**, and/or **Glory Be** for health and well-being of the people who will receive these greeting cards! **Reminder:** Your students should **sign their first name only on the greeting card! No last names!**

Closing Prayer

Together as a class, recite one of your class' grade-level prayers as the closing prayer.

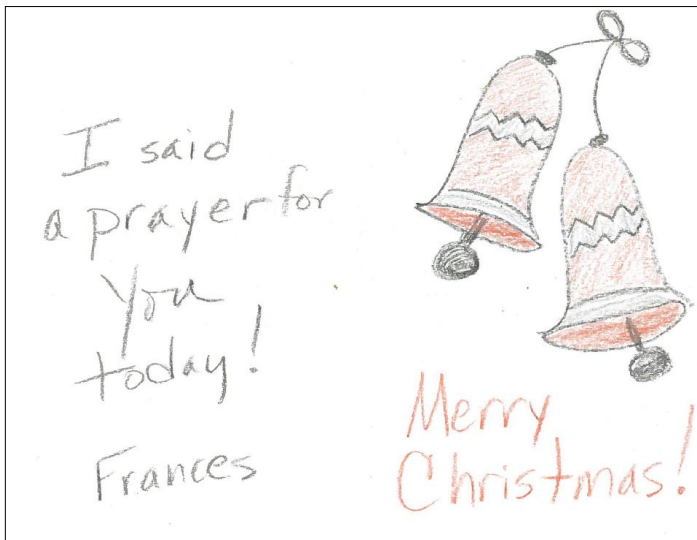
NOTE:

**Greeting card samples
are included on the next page.**

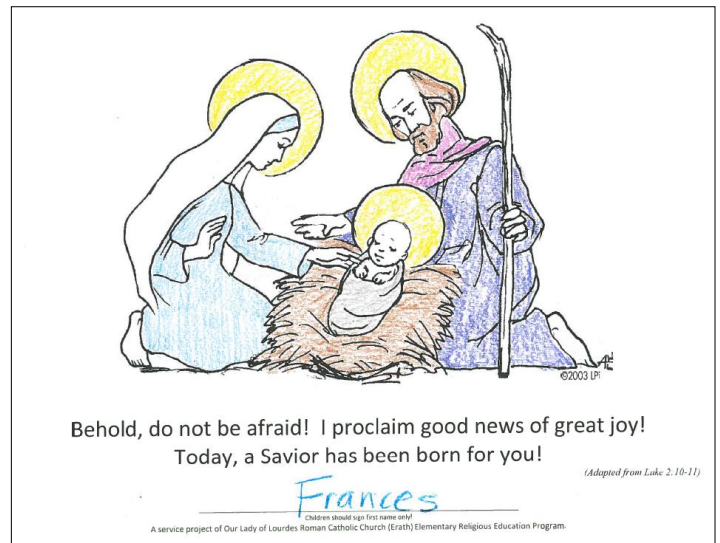
Note: The **front** and **back** covers will be completely drawn/written by the children.
Please remind them that **their card will be folded in half**,
so they should draw a design that fits on a half sheet of paper!

Christmas Greeting Card – Sample 1

Back and Front Cover of greeting card
(drawn by the child)

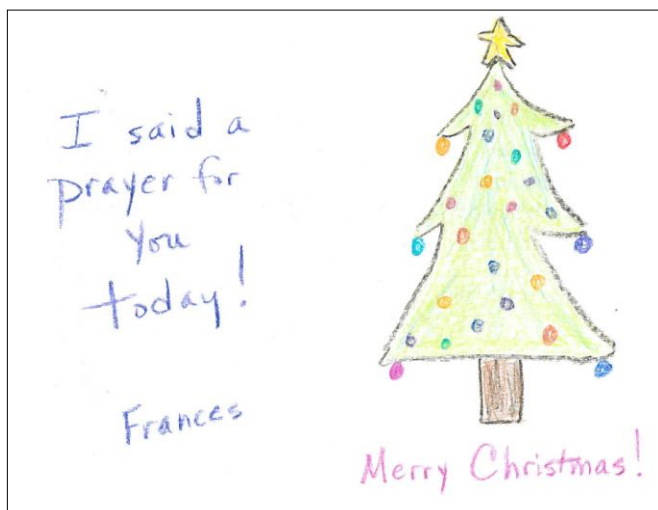


Inside of greeting card
(photocopied, but should be colored)



Christmas Greeting Card – Sample 2

Back and Front Cover of greeting card
(drawn by the child)



Inside of greeting card
(photocopied, but should be colored)

