The Joy of Advent: Week 1, Lower Elementary

Learning Goals

› Advent is a time for waiting and for preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ, not only as a baby at Christmas, but also at the end of time in His promised Second Coming.
› God prepared His people from the very beginning for Christ’s coming and for salvation.
› The Advent wreath and candles, the Jesse Tree, and Advent calendars are symbols of the Advent season.

Connection to the Catechism of the Catholic Church

› CCC 522-525

Vocabulary

› Advent
› Advent Wreath
› Advent Calendar
› Jesse Tree
› Messiah

BIBLICAL TOUCHSTONES

A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.

ISAIAH 11:1

She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

LUKE 2:7
Lesson Plan

Day One

Warm Up

A. Begin by leading your students in the prayer for this lesson.

B. Distribute to your students the Handout A: Teaching the Liturgical Year: First Week of Advent. Read the Gospel passage aloud to your students as they follow along. Then discuss the focus and reflection questions with them as a class.

C. Activity extension: If you have set up an Advent wreath and candles in your class (see the formative assessment for day 2 of this lesson), have a “lighting” ceremony of the first candle before reading the Gospel for this week.

Materials

- Handout A: Teaching the Liturgical Year: First Week of Advent
- Handout B: Advent: The Coming of Our Savior
- Handout C: Waiting
- Handout D: Advent Poem
- Handout E: Symbols of Advent
- Handout F: Ornament Template

Prayer

Dear God, we praise you and adore you. Thank you for preparing us, your people, for the coming of your Son. Thank you for sending Jesus to us, to show us your love and to save us from sin. Help us to prepare our hearts to welcome your Son at Christmas. Help us to know the joy that He brings to the world. Amen.

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Activity
A. Explain to your students that this Sunday marks the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of the first week of the Advent season. Advent is a liturgical season in the life of the Church. We celebrate Advent in the four weeks that lead up to Christmas Day. Advent is a time for waiting and for preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ, not only as a baby at Christmas, but also at the end of time in His promised Second Coming.

B. Continue to explain that, over the next few weeks, your students will learn more about Advent and the signs and symbols of the season and will do some activities to help them enter more deeply into this time of waiting and preparation.

C. Distribute to your students the worksheet Handout B: Advent: The Coming of Our Savior.

D. Read the background essay aloud to your students. Then discuss the focus questions together.

Formative Assessment
A. Distribute to your students the worksheet Handout C: Waiting. Then explain to them that we wait for all kinds of things in our lives. We wait in line to check out at the grocery store. We sit in the waiting room when we see a doctor. We wait at stop lights, and we wait for the bus to pick us up. We wait for phone calls from friends and family members. We wait for our birthday to come, and we wait for holidays and days off from school.

B. Then ask your students the following questions:

› What are some other things that we wait for? Accept reasoned answers.

› Is the thing or event we wait for better or worse because we have to wait for it? Accept reasoned answers. Some things we wait for could be worse because we have to wait for them, such as getting a shot at the doctor’s office. Other things are better because we have to wait for them, such as when we anticipate the fun we’ll have at a birthday party.
C. Have your students complete the reflection activity on Handout C: Waiting. You may have your students write about or draw a picture of a time when they had to wait for something good.

D. When finished, consider calling on a few students to share their stories or drawings. You may have them share with the whole class or in groups.

DAY TWO
Warm-Up
Distribute to each student the Handout D: Advent Poem worksheet. Have your students create an acrostic poem using the letters of the word Advent. Each line of the poem should describe some aspect of Advent or Christmas.

Activity
A. Explain to your students that the Advent season is filled with signs, symbols, and traditions to help us reflect on and prepare for the coming of Christ. Distribute to your students Handout E: Symbols of Advent. Have your students read about the symbols of Advent and color the images.

B. When they have finished, review the Advent symbols by asking your students the following:
   > Which symbol of Advent is made from evergreen branches formed into a circle? *The Advent wreath.*
   > On which symbol of Advent are small doors opened to reveal an image of Jesus, a Scripture passage, or a small toy or piece of candy? *The Advent calendar.*
   > The circular shape of which symbol of Advent represents eternal life? *The Advent wreath.*
› Which symbol of Advent is decorated with ornaments that represent important events and people from Salvation History? The Jesse Tree.

› The green color of which symbol of Advent represents hope for salvation? The Advent wreath.

› Which symbol of Advent is connected to a prophecy from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah? The Jesse Tree.

› Which symbol of Advent marks each passing day of the season? The Advent calendar.

› Which symbol of Advent is decorated with four candles, each representing one of the weeks of Advent? The Advent wreath.

› Which symbol of Advent borrows the idea of a decoration for winter holidays that predates Christianity? The Jesse Tree.

› What do the purple candles of the Advent wreath represent? Sorrow for sins, or repentance.

› What does the pink candle of the Advent wreath represent? Rejoicing because our Savior is coming soon.

C. As an alternate lesson suggestion, arrange your students in groups of three or four. Assign each group one of the symbols of Advent. Have them read about their assigned symbol and color the image. Then have each group give a short presentation to the class about their symbol.

**Formative Assessment**

Consider doing one or all of the following during this Advent season:

› Set up a Christmas tree in your classroom as a Jesse Tree and have your students decorate it with ornaments representing events or people from Salvation History that prepared for the coming of Jesus. Distribute **Handout F: Ornament Template** and have your students creatively illustrate different events. You may choose a day each week of Advent to have your students create and hang new ornaments on the tree, or spend one lesson at the beginning of Advent having them create and hang new ornaments. Suggestions for Jesse Tree ornament symbols, including Scripture verses to read, can be found at SophiaOnline.org/JesseTree. Consider looking up and reading aloud or retelling the Scripture stories as you add each person or event to your class Jesse Tree.
Set up an Advent wreath with candles in a prominent place in your classroom. Have a “lighting” ceremony at the beginning of each week of Advent. Consider reading that week’s Gospel reading as part of the lighting ceremony and having a discussion about it using the focus questions from that week’s Joy of the Gospel lesson.

Create an Advent-calendar bulletin board in your classroom with flaps of paper that you can open each day during Advent. Decorate the calendar with different images of Christmas, Jesus, or images from Salvation History. Each flap could reveal a Scripture passage from the story of Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:1-20), allowing you to read the Christmas story aloud throughout Advent. Or, the flaps could reveal some sort of prizes for your students, or any creative idea that you think is appropriate.
**Answer Key**

**Handout A: Teaching the Liturgical Year: First Week of Advent**

1. “Be watchful! Be alert!” Because we do not know when the time will come.
2. Keep watch. They do not know when the Lord of the house is coming back and they do not want to be found sleeping.
3. Accept reasoned answers.

**Handout B: Advent: The Coming of Our Savior**

1. Adam and Eve sinned against God by turning away from His love. They needed salvation from sin.

2. Jesus Christ, God’s only beloved Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He assumed a human nature and became man, He was born on Christmas Day in a stable in Bethlehem, His mother is the Virgin Mary, His earthly foster father is St. Joseph, He taught us how to be holy, He showed us the Father’s love for us, He gave His life on the Cross and rose from the dead, and He defeated death.

3. The coming of Jesus at Christmas and at the end of time at His Second Coming. We draw close to God and think about all He has done for us, we give thanks to God for all of His blessings, we pray, we follow Jesus’ example by serving others, we make room in our hearts and lives for Jesus to be with us.