

December

Family Catechesis

Month of the Immaculate Conception

Dec 2023

Family Catechesis Schedule

December

Advent-Gifts of Love

6-Holy Cross 6:30 pm

6-*Confirmation /First Reconciliation*

Check-In @ Holy Cross

7- HC *First Reconciliation* 6:00 pm

10- *Gift of Love* to be given at Mass

January

Sanctifying Time

7-St. Lawrence 9:00 am

10-Holy Cross 6:30 pm

10- *Confirmation Check-In*

+Hope + Peace + Joy + Love+

The time of year when rushing, hurrying, and business takes on a deeper level. While there is always much to do, remember to give time to God along the way. This season of Advent aids us in being truly receptive to receiving the best gift which is Jesus. Be sure to pause, pray, and thank God for all the gifts you have and remember to be a gift to one another.

May all the blessings of heaven be with you and all your loves!

December Catholic Faith Focus: Advent

First Advent Candle/Sunday: Hope

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.”

– C.S. Lewis

It is only fitting that the first candle on the Advent wreath represents **Hope** – the first Sunday of Advent not only leads us to anticipate the birth of Christ but celebrate the beginning of a new liturgical season as well. The first candle is **purple**, the primary color of Advent and a color symbolizing royalty. This Advent, light the first candle on **Sunday, December 3, 2023**.

Second Advent Candle/Sunday: Peace

“May we be in this world a ray of that light which shone forth from Bethlehem, bringing joy and peace to the hearts of all men and women.” – Pope Francis

The second candle on the Advent wreath represents **Peace**. Like the first candle, it is also **purple**. The second Advent candle reminds us of Mary and Joseph’s journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem before Mary gave birth to Jesus. This Advent, light the second candle on **Sunday, December 10, 2023**.

Third Advent Candle/Sunday: Joy – “Gaudete Sunday”

“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’” (Luke 2:10-12)

The third candle of Advent symbolizes **Joy**. As we continue to approach Christmas Day, our joy grows more and more. The third candle takes us back to the joyful anticipation of the shepherds who journeyed to see Jesus in Bethlehem, even before the wise men. On this third Sunday of Advent, which the Church calls “Gaudete Sunday,” meaning rejoice or praise, we light the third candle, and its color is **pink**, the liturgical color for joy. This Advent, light the third candle on **Sunday, December 17, 2023**.

Fourth Advent Candle/Sunday: Love

“And in the end, everything else will turn out to be unimportant and inessential, except for this: Father, Child, and Love.” – St. (Pope) John Paul II

The fourth candle of Advent represents **Love**, the ultimate love of God that He might send His only Son for us. The fourth candle of Advent is lit the Sunday before Christmas, and it is **purple**, leading us to eagerly await the new Kingdom of God on earth. This Advent, light the fourth candle on **Sunday, December 24, 2023**. Source: Dynamic Catholic

Advent Feast & Christmas Feasts Days

Advent

- St. Francis Xavier** (December 3)
- St. John Damascene**, (December 4)
- St. Nicholas** (December 6)
- St. Ambrose** (December 7)
- Immaculate Conception** (December 8)
- St. Juan Diego** (December 9)
- St. Damascus** (December 11)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe** (December 12)
- St. Lucy** (December 13)
- St. John of the Cross** (December 14)
- St. Peter Canisius** (December 21)
- St. John of Kanty** (December 23)

Christmas

- St. Stephen** (December 26)
- St. John the Evangelist** (December 27)
- Holy Innocents** (December 28)
- St. Sylvester I** (December 31)
- Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God** (January 1)
- Epiphany** (January 6)



Live Your Catholic Faith

Light the candles each week on your Advent wreath.
Pray the Advent prayers at meal time and live Advent.
Let Hope, Peace, Joy and Love be present before the presents!

Family Prayer

The Latin version of this prayer, Ave, Maris Stella, can be traced to the late eighth/early ninth century. The title, Star of the Sea (or Ocean), is one of the oldest and most widely spread titles for Mary. "Stella" means star in Latin. This prayer likens the Blessed Mother to a bright star that sheds light in the ocean of darkness, the way her graces bring forth peace in our troubled lives. The faithful may also say this at the beginning of any prayer to give honor to the Blessed Mother and ask for guidance. Ave Maris Stella, pray for us!

Ave Maris Stella

*Hail, you Star of Ocean!
Portal of the sky,
Ever Virgin Mother,
Of the Lord most high.*

*O! by Gabriel's Ave,
Uttered long ago,
Eva's name reversing,
Establish peace below.*

*Break the captive's fetters;
Light on blindness pour;
All our ills expelling,
Every bliss implore.*

*Show yourself a mother;
Offer him our sighs,
Who for us Incarnate
Did not you despise.*

*Virgin of all virgins!
To your shelter take us;
Gentlest of the gentle!
Chaste and gentle make us.*

*Still as on we journey,
Help our weak endeavor,
Till with you and Jesus
We rejoice forever.
Through the highest heaven,
To the Almighty Three,
Father, Son, and Spirit,
One same glory be.*

Celebrate the **Advent** Season

Bless the Christmas Tree

You may bless the tree as soon as you put it up, or you can wait until after you have decorated it. When you are ready to do the blessing, gather everyone around the tree and designate someone to lead the following prayer.

You will need water or holy water (if available) to celebrate this blessing.

Leader: Loving God, we stand before you once again. We stand here ready to celebrate the birth of your son, Jesus.

(Have everyone extend a hand in a gesture of blessing. Sprinkle water or holy water on the tree while praying the following prayer.)

Leader: Bless this tree, this sign of life and freshness and perseverance in our midst. It stands as a reminder that you are born anew in us each day. Bless our family and friends as we celebrate this joyous season. Keep us safe in our travels, kind in our conversations, and gracious in our giving and receiving. We ask you this in confidence, because we know you love us.

All: Amen.

Assign /Draw names for Advent Angels

Randomly assign/draw your family members as secret “advent angels” to each other. The goal is for each person to perform acts of kindness and service (in secret) for the person to whom they’ve been assigned. **On Christmas Eve, you reveal whose name you had and give a little gift.**

The Three Wise Men/Magi

Place your wise men/Magi in different area of your home. Move them weekly a little bit closer to the nativity. Then when its Epiphany, you’ll understand the journey they took more profoundly.

Feast of St. Nicholas

Have your children put their shoes by the fireplace or by their bedroom door. While they are sleeping, put little surprises in their shoes (saint cards, gold chocolate coins, a few pennies) Use this special feast day as an opportunity to teach your children about the life of this amazing saint.

St. Lucy

The feast of St. Lucy, virgin and martyr, is on December 13th. Her life story can be found in most saints books. Bake a cake in honor of her and share her story around the dinner table.

Any day of the season

Pray the rosary as family. Invite the Blessed Mother into your homes and honor her even more so during this Advent and Christmas time.

Catechesis- The Great O's

The Great O's" (*add to your existing prayers*)

On the evening of December 17, the final phase of preparation for Christmas begins with the first of the great "O Antiphons" of Advent. These prayers are seven jewels of liturgical song, one for each day until Christmas Eve. They seem to sum up all our Advent longing for the Savior.

December 17

O Wisdom, that proceedest from the mouth of the Most High, Reaching from end to end mightily, and sweetly disposing all things: come and teach us the way of prudence.

December 18

O Lord and Ruler of the house of Israel, Who didst appear unto Moses in the burning bush, and gavest him the law on Sinai: come and redeem us by Thy outstretched arm.

December 19

O Root of Jesse, Who standest as the Ensign of the people, before Whom kings shall not open their lips; to Whom the Gentiles shall pray: come and deliver us, tarry now no more.

December 20

O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel; Who openest, and no man shutteth, Who shuttest, and no man openeth: come and lead the captive from the prison house, and him that sitteth in darkness and the shadow of death.

December 21

O Dawn of the East, Splendor of the eternal Light, and Sun of justice: Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness, and the shadow of death.

December 22

O King of the gentiles, yea, and the desire thereof, the Cornerstone that maketh both one: come and save man, whom Thou hast made out of the slime of the earth.

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the expectation of all nations and their Salvation: come and save us, O Lord our God.

Act of Love

Share the Christmas Joy with one another. Spend time together and cherish the moments!

“The magic of Christmas is not in the presents, but in His presence.”



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR

Family Catechesis Team

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