

Advent Faith Conversations:

The Fourth Week of Advent

*"I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."
-- From this Sunday's Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38*



Adult reflection for this week

This week's theme is a call to open ourselves to receive God. Less than a week away, Christmas celebrates Jesus' coming in history – incarnate as a man living amidst humanity; but it invites us to re-live the mystery *now*. Our tender God wants to dwell with *you* – to be present to your thoughts, feelings, and decisions – to share life with you, much as spouses share life. Like Mary, you may be troubled by this prospect (how, what does this mean, what will I have to do/give up?) Be reassured: *do not be afraid, you have found favor with God, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, nothing will be impossible for God*. Our God wishes intimacy with each of us and awaits our response!

Family daily conversation and prayer starters

Darken the room and light all four candles, saying, "Jesus, you are the Light of the World." Everyone responds, "Let your light shine in our darkness." After each day's conversation, pray the prayer together on the second page (print so everyone has a mini-sheet) and sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."

From Dec. 17-23, the Church's nightly prayers contain brief verses begging Jesus—by symbolic names— to come. These verses begin with the invocation "O" and are called the "O Antiphons." The various names of Jesus (based on Old Testament Scriptures) help us understand facets of Christ and his mission, and the repeated request for him to "come!" focuses our anticipation and enkindles our hearts with longing. They are incorporated here for your reflection and are the basis of the song "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." After each day's prayer, pray the "O Antiphon" for that day.

Sunday, December 20

What is involved in opening your home to a guest? (share time/space, consideration of their needs/wants, get to know better) What does it mean to be "open to" an idea, a possibility, help, a person? (not self-sufficient . . .) What does it mean to be open to God?

Monday, December 21

On the year's darkest day, our wreath is bright—as the sky before sunrise. Jesus, our Light, is coming! What is your relationship to light? (helps see, allays fears, allows work, brings joy) How can Jesus be Light? *After the prayer, add: St. Peter Canisius, pray for us.*

Tuesday, December 22

How would you feel meeting an important person? (excited, nervous, unimportant) Jesus is greater than any world figure, yet he entered the world as a newborn, in poverty. What does this reveal about God. . . for yourself. . . for the world?

Wednesday, December 23

Emmanuel means "God is with us." In the Old Testament, God dwelt with the Israelites in a tent. John 1 says Jesus became "flesh" and made his dwelling ("pitched his tent") among us. Sunday's Gospel tells of the moment Jesus became physically present inside of Mary – dwelling in her. In an ordinary day, how is "God with you"? How do you shut/open to him?

Thursday, December 24

Tonight is Christmas Eve! The Light has dawned. Hope is fulfilled. Perfect joy is rooted in allowing Jesus to reign in our homes, hearts, and lives. *We welcome you, Emmanuel—our Joy!*

FRONT. Print and cut one out for each family member.

Week 4 Prayer

Holy Spirit, come upon us! Heal, cleanse, warm, and fill us with your love. With you, all things are possible. Help us to open our hearts and homes to Jesus with joy. Amen.

Sing together:

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high
And order all things, far and nigh
To us the path of knowledge show
And cause us in her ways to go.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease
And be Thyself our King of peace. (Refrain)

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O Antiphons

Dec. 20: O Key of David, opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:

come and free the prisoners of darkness!

Dec. 21: O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:

come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Dec. 22: O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:

come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

Dec. 23: O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

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