

# Advent Faith Conversations:

## The First Week of Advent

Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming. . .  
-- From this week's Sunday Gospel: Mark 13:33-37



## Adult reflection for this week

This week's theme is a call to consciousness and attentiveness. Life can be so full that we don't reflect on our daily activities, experiences, relationships, or reactions. Advent is time earmarked for pausing. Difficult when Christmas preparations are ramping up, but what is Christmas about? Presents, concerts, having the house perfect - or preparing our hearts to celebrate the coming of Jesus? How does he come to us? How will we know he's come to us? Let's take this week to . . . reflect.

## Family daily conversation and prayer starters

Talk about [the symbolism of the wreath and bless it](#). Darken the room and light one purple candle, 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."

### Sunday, December 3

What is Advent? (It is a time of preparing for Christmas. It comes from a word that means "coming.") When we know someone is coming, how do we prepare? For whose coming are we preparing? After the prayer, add: *St. Francis Xavier, pray for us.*

### Monday, December 4

How does our culture prepare for Christmas? (Ads, stores, schools, pop music and movies) Is this about preparing for Jesus' coming? What would help us prepare for Jesus' coming? Compare/contrast.

### Tuesday, December 5

It sure is dark before we light our candle – and what a difference the one flame makes! What "darkness" do we experience in life? Why do you think Jesus called himself Light? Why do we need his coming? After the prayer: *Mary and Joseph help us on our own journey to Bethlehem this Advent. — Are you putting your shoes out for St. Nicholas' Day tomorrow?*

### Wednesday, December 6

What does it mean that Jesus is coming at Christmas? He was born in Bethlehem a long time ago, so why are we preparing now? (Remembering Jesus' birth at Christmas somehow makes it present again.) After the prayer, add: *St. Nicholas, pray for us.*

### Thursday, December 7

Does Jesus come to us on other days, not just Christmas? When? How? (In other people, Scripture, a feeling of closeness in our hearts, a thought, Communion, etc.) How can we be more aware of this? After the prayer, add: *St. Ambrose, pray for us. For tomorrow's Holy Day, when do you plan to go to Mass?*

### Friday, December 8

How has Jesus come to you today? If Jesus comes to us every day, how does that change how we work, play, treat each other, etc.? What could help our family build the habit of reflecting more, of being more aware of Jesus' coming – even after Advent? After the prayer, add: *Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us.*

### Saturday, December 9

As Catholics we believe Jesus will come again – at the end of our own lives, but also at the end of the world. How does this make you feel? Why? How does Advent help us prepare for this coming? After the prayer: *St. Juan Diego, pray for us.*



### Week 1 Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to us.  
Please help us to be reflective and watching for you in our lives each day, especially as we prepare for Christmas. Amen.

*Sing together:*

O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

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

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. (Refrain)

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# Advent Faith Conversations:

## The Second Week of Advent

*"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."*

-- From this week's Sunday Gospel: Mark 1:1-8



## Adult reflection for this week

This week, the theme of our Sunday readings calls us to *prepare* for Jesus' coming. While there's overlap from last week, this is another facet: first, consciousness, and now *active preparation*. Oh, we're usually active alright this time of year! But don't be fooled. What if the *active* part was actually about quieting ourselves and practicing an interior posture to receive? A letting go, so that *God himself can actively prepare* the way, his way, in our hearts. . . and through us, to the world?

## Family daily conversation and prayer starters

*Darken the room and light two purple 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."*

### Sunday, December 10

What kinds of things do we *prepare* for? (tests, games, meals, meetings, vacations, guests, etc.) What actions are involved? What "in-actions" get us ready? (resting, clearing our minds to focus, listening, etc.)

### Monday, December 11

Preparation is gradual. Do you like the process or do you wish you could get right to the "event"? How does the outcome, or your experience of the "event" depend on your preparation beforehand?

### Tuesday, December 12

Wise preparation starts with the end in mind. What is the "end goal" of Advent? Of life? How does this guide our preparations? How was Mary prepared and how did she prepare for Jesus? *After the prayer, add: Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.*

### Wednesday, December 13

Sit in the dark a minute. What does it make you think and feel? (*Now light the candles.*) We often think of darkness as something scary, lonely, and to be avoided. When is it helpful? What can we learn from it? (Appreciating light, heightening awareness, learning to trust, rest, etc.) Jesus is the Light, but we can also find him when in darkness. *After the prayer, add: St. Lucy, pray for us.*

### Thursday, December 14

In Sunday's 2nd reading, St. Peter speaks of preparing for Jesus' 2nd coming in terms of "what sort of persons ought you to be." Have you thought about "preparation" not so much as *doing to accomplish*, but *being*. . .? To be a sort of person? What sort? *After the prayer, add: St. John of the Cross, pray for us.*

### Friday, December 15

In week 1 we talked about Advent being about remembering Jesus' coming at Christmas. How can we *prepare* to receive him? What *actions* could we take? Who should we *be* (become) as we await his coming . . . in a manger and in our hearts and home?

### Saturday, December 16

In week 1 we talked about God's coming to us each day (through Scripture, people, a sense of his presence, Communion, etc.), but often, we don't notice him. What mountains need leveling so we can see him - less pride, noise, fear. . .? What valleys need filling so we can welcome him - more mercy, trust, kindness. . .?



Print and cut one out for each family member.

### **Week 2 Prayer**

Merciful God, use our daily circumstances to make us the sort of people that see and welcome your coming. *You* prepare the way in our hearts, in your way. Amen.

*Sing together:*

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might  
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height  
In ancient times didst give the law  
In cloud, and majesty and awe.

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

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny  
From depths of hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave.  
(Refrain)

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# Advent Faith Conversations:

## The Third Week of Advent

"I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul"  
-- From this Sunday's First Reading: Isaiah 61: 1-2, 10-11



## Adult reflection for this week

The readings and prayers of "Gaudete Sunday" call us to rejoice as we near the celebration of Jesus' birth. Does rejoicing mean "making oneself happy"? Is that possible? Sustainable? Happiness is a fleeting feeling that comes in response to some stimulant – a good cup of coffee, a pleasant interaction, a new toy. Joy is an enduring state of soul that comes from God and needs tending. To rejoice *this* Advent: remember *past* blessings and entrust the *future* to God with sure hope, so as to live the *present* (happy or sad, easy or difficult, light or dark) with peace. Don't settle for happiness . . . seek *joy*!

## Family daily conversation and prayer starters

*Darken the room and light the two purple candles and the one rose, saying, "Jesus, you are the Light of the World." Everyone responds, "Let your light shine in our darkness." Take note of how the light is getting stronger with each candle. 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."*

### Sunday, December 17

What makes you happy?  
Stuff, success, affirmations,  
cookies, a little peace and quiet. . . Are you happy all the time? What makes you joyful? Is it different from happiness? (deeper, tied to love, can go back to it. . .)

*From now until the birth of our Savior, the Church's nightly prayers contain brief verses begging Jesus—by symbolic names—to come. After each day's prayer, pray the "O Antiphon" for that day.*

### Monday, December 18

Happiness happens; it comes and goes. Joy endures, runs deeper, is a grace from God. It comes from knowing ourselves, and knowing/trusting God. Think of a time you had joy but not happiness. Vice versa?

### Tuesday, December 19

Sunday's 1<sup>st</sup> reading and responsorial Psalm list good things that God has done (healing, freeing, saving, having mercy, filling, helping). What good things has God done in your life? In this day? Consider how reflection can foster gratitude. . . and joy.

### Wednesday, December 20

How does recalling God's hand in the past affect how you think about the future? Hope is being certain of the tenderness of God and confident that all in God's care will be well in the end. How is hope linked to joy?

### Thursday, December 21

Our past is full of both clear and hidden grace. We hope in God's loving help for the future. And so let's live our present with *peace*, which Pope Francis calls "joy lived to perfection." Are you joyful? (with a sense of peace, hopeful perspective, security amidst struggles) What prevents your joy? *After the prayer, add: St. Peter Canisius, pray for us.*

### Friday, December 22

In Sunday's Gospel, John the Baptist admits he's not the Messiah but the bearer of glad tidings: "there is one among you"—Jesus. Humility is living the truth that we're not God, but we are good (though flawed), loved, and have purpose. How is humility linked to joy?

### Saturday, December 23

In Sunday's 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, Paul says, "Rejoice always." We can't always feel *happy*, but *joy* is always available to us. . . and sustainable. *Rejoicing* draws from a deep well, accessing something deeper than success, pleasure or comfort. What /who feeds joy in you?



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

### Week 3 Prayer

With Mary, we glorify you God for the great things you have done for us. Take care of our future. Help us to live *right now* filled with your peace and joy. Amen.

*Sing together:*

O come, Thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heavenly home  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

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

O come, O Bright and Morning Star  
And bring us comfort from afar!  
Dispel the shadows of the night  
And turn our darkness into light. (Refrain)

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### O Antiphons

**Dec. 17:** O Wisdom of our God Most High,  
guiding creation with power and love:  
**come to teach us the path of knowledge!**

**Dec. 18:** O Leader of the House of Israel,  
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:  
**come to rescue us with your mighty power!**

**Dec. 19:** O Root of Jesse's stem,  
sign of God's love for all his people:  
**come to save us without delay!**

**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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# 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. Just a few hours 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!

Every now and then, the fourth week of Advent is very short, depending on which day of the week December 25th falls. This year, it's the shortest it can be: not even a full day! Sunday morning is the fourth week of Advent. Sunday night we're already celebrating Christmas Eve!

## Family daily conversation and prayer starters

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

### Sunday, December 24

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?

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!*





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

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

O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear. (Refrain)

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