

Advent Faith Conversations:

The Fourth Week of Advent

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel. . .
-- From this Sunday's Gospel: Matthew 1: 18-24



Adult reflection for this week

This week's theme is a call to open ourselves to receive God. In just a week, 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*, intimately – to be present to your thoughts, feelings, and decisions – to share life with you, much as spouses share life. This is GOOD NEWS! Do you experience it as such in daily life?

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. The repeated request to "come!" focuses our anticipation and enkindles our hearts with longing. They are the basis of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." After the prayer, pray the "O Antiphon" for that day.

Sunday, December 18

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 19

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?

Tuesday, December 20

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. In an ordinary day, how is "God with *you*"? How do you shut/open to him?

Wednesday, 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?

Thursday, December 22

As Catholics we believe that Jesus is not only spiritually but also physically with us in the Eucharist, dwelling in our churches. How can this Eucharistic reality of "God with us" shape our lives? How can Mary be an example to us of how to receive Jesus into ourselves?

Friday, December 23

Mary and Joseph were the first to welcome Jesus. They shared the joy of his presence with all those open to recognizing him — the shepherds, the wisemen . . . an ever widening ripple of joy. To whom can you bring the accompanying presence of Jesus this week?

Saturday, 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, 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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BACK of prayer cards. After prayer, the leader prays the first part of the day's antiphon, all respond with the words in bold.

O Antiphons

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 dark-
ness 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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