



Creative Reflection FOR *Advent 2021*

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As we enter Advent, we hear the familiar Gospel readings of the Advent season each Sunday. The Advent Gospel passages present faithful followers of Christ and call us to action as we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Messiah. As teachers and catechists, we are called to introduce these Advent Gospel passages to the children with whom we minister. The task, however, is not to simply read the Bible to children but to help them truly encounter the Word of God in meaningful ways. The following material presents some fun, creative adaptations and activities for the Advent 2021 Gospels that can help bring the Word to life.

**First Sunday of Advent:**

November 28, 2021

Gospel Reading:

Luke 21:25–28, 34–36

Theme: When Jesus Comes**Activity:** Spontaneous Drama

This Gospel passage is a dramatic prophecy of the end times. The dramatic images beg to be acted out! As you read this passage to the children, assign the following actions to specific individuals, small groups, or to the entire class.

When you read:**Have them:**

"the sun, the moon, and the stars"

make circles with their arms above their bodies

"roar of the sea and the raging tides"

roar and sway back and forth

"faint from fear"

pretend to feel faint with scared faces

"the Son of Man will appear"

look upward and point

"stand up and raise your heads"

stand up straight and look up to the sky

"too much feasting and drinking"

pretend to eat a meal

"catch you like a trap"

pretend to have their foot caught in a trap

"pray that you will have the strength"

fold hands and bow heads in prayer

"stand before the Son of Man"

wave and smile at Jesus

Follow the acting out of the Gospel passage by leading the children in a conversation about what it is like waiting for Christmas to come. Draw comparisons to waiting for Jesus. Be sure the children understand that although the world isn't yet perfect, Jesus is at work making the world a more loving place through us, his followers. When he comes again at the end of time, it will be amazing and wonderful. Lead the children in a closing prayer that asks for that time to come. (The Lord's Prayer would also be appropriate.)

**Second Sunday of Advent:**

December 5, 2021

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:1-6**Theme:** Make a Smooth Path for Jesus**Activity:** Construction Project

After describing the political leaders in charge during John’s ministry, this Gospel passage focuses on making a smooth path for Jesus to enter our lives. Read the passage and briefly discuss its meaning with the children. Then have them create a group diorama based on verses 4 and 5:

As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

“Someone is shouting in the desert:

‘Get the road ready for the Lord;

make a straight path for him to travel!

Every valley must be filled up,

every hill and mountain leveled off.

The winding roads must be made straight,

and the rough paths made smooth.”

Use whatever construction materials you have on hand—construction paper, glue, tape, scissors, crayons—to create a river valley surrounded by trees and hills. Then for your prayer, give each child a gray or brown “paving stone” that you have prepared in advance. After they write their name on their stone, have them add it to the diorama creating a (somewhat) straight path through the valley. As they add their stone, invite them to pray, “I am preparing the way of the Lord.” The rest of the group could echo each individual child, saying, “(Name) is preparing the way of the Lord.”

**Third Sunday of Advent:**

December 12, 2021

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:10-18**Theme:** Giving to Others**Activity:** Artistic Prayer

In this Gospel, John the Baptist tells the people what they can do to prepare their hearts for the coming of Jesus. His suggestions are works of charity and justice, making sure that other people have what they need. Help the children meditate on what this might mean in their lives. After reading the Gospel passage, engage the children in some creative brainstorming on how they can be of service to their family and friends or to people in need. Then have them draw pictures of themselves performing these acts of service. The pictures can be shared with the rest of the class and even displayed inside or outside of the classroom.

As you prepare to lead prayer, remind the children of the acts of service they brainstormed and drew. Have the children prepare their hearts for Jesus' arrival by inviting them to pray for the people served by these acts. Facilitate prayer in which each child holds up their drawing and says, "I pray for _____ . Help me to serve them." All can respond, "Lord, hear our prayer." The _____ children can pray for people by name (first name only) or offer general prayers ("I pray for those without a home.").

**Fourth Sunday of Advent:**

December 19, 2021

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:39-45**Theme:** Mary Is Our Mother**Activity:** Storybook Imagining

This Sunday's Gospel is the account of Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth, which Catholics call the Visitation. It is a beautiful story, but we just hear the bare bones version. However, the people of God have a history of meditating on biblical stories by filling in the details using our imagination (a process Jewish people call *midrash*). Lead the children in an imaginative meditation.

First, ask the children to speculate about what Mary might have been feeling, or other details not included in the story. Then introduce an illustrated children's storybook on Mary. You may already have such a book in the school or parish library; if not, here are some recommended titles:

- *Mary, the Mother of Jesus*, by Tomie de Paola (Ignatius Press, 2020)
- *The Life of Mary for Children*, by Karen Cavanaugh (Regina Press, 2000)
- *All about Mary Mother of Jesus* (Baby Professor, 2017)

Gather the children around to read the children's book to them. You can read the whole book or just the section on the Visitation. Pause to show the children the pictures and to elicit comments and observations about details that help them better understand Mary's experience. When you are finished, lead the children in praying the Hail Mary.

By leading children through creative reflection on the Advent Gospel readings, you will help them truly prepare their hearts for Christmas and encounter the Word in a way that changes hearts and touches lives.

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Find the names below in this word find. Words may be found running horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Mary

Elizabeth

Zechariah

Abraham

Jesus

John

Gabriel

D	C	L	J	B	Y	Z	A	D	F
E	H	V	O	D	M	H	K	L	E
M	S	B	H	O	U	A	E	C	L
A	A	F	N	C	T	I	R	V	I
H	C	N	H	B	R	R	A	Y	Z
A	S	C	G	B	S	A	G	U	A
R	U	K	A	H	P	H	Y	I	B
B	S	G	L	J	Q	C	F	V	E
A	E	Y	Z	P	Q	E	R	G	T
G	J	A	N	E	D	Z	B	W	H

My  praises
the Lord;
my soul is glad
because of
God my Savior.



Luke 1:46

Message Received

Read Luke 1:26–38 and use the words in the box to help you complete the crossword puzzle.

angel	Gabriel	Nazareth	Joseph
troubled	Jesus	king	servant
Yes	mother		

Across

1. God will make his Son a _____.
4. Mary was promised in marriage to _____.
5. Mary said she was the Lord's _____.
7. God sent a(n) _____ with a message for Mary.
9. Mary was chosen to be the _____ of God's Son.
10. Mary trusted in God and said, "_____."

Down

2. The messenger's name was _____.
3. Mary was _____ by the message.
6. God's messenger went to the town of _____.
8. Mary was to name God's Son _____.



Seek and Find: Look at pages 1574 and 1575 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*. What two figures do you see through the windows of the stone house at the bottom of the story page?