

Prayer Celebration

Preparation: Purchase a length of garland that will stretch into a circle formed by your students. If desired, invite one of the children to proclaim the Gospel reading. Gather the children into a large circle. Teach the children the responses to the prayers.

Leader: Glory to God in the highest.

All: And peace to God's people on earth.

Leader: Listen to the Word of the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Reader: "The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'" (Luke 2:10-14)

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: [Pause for a moment and then proceed with the following prayer. After each of the four parts, have the children pass along a length of the garland until, at the end, it forms a complete circle.]

God of Light,
We give you thanks for this sacred time of year.
It is a season to celebrate Jesus' birth.

All: Glory to God in the highest.

Leader: God of Wisdom,
We give you thanks for this sacred time of year.
It is a season of light.

All: Glory to God in the highest.

Leader: God of Love,
We give you thanks for this sacred time of year.
It is a season of giving.

All: Glory to God in the highest.

Leader: God of Hope,
We give you thanks for this sacred time of year.
It is a season of peace.

All: Glory to God in the highest.

Leader: Glory to you, O God.
We stand together in a circle of your light, wisdom, love, and hope.
Bless us during this sacred season.
We pray this in the name of Jesus,
whose birth we celebrate with wonder and joy.

All: Amen.

Prayer adapted from *Gather In My Name*, "Celebrating the Season of Christmas." Published by William H. Sadlier, Inc.

Advent and Christmas:

Preparing for and Celebrating the Word Made Flesh

The liturgical year begins with *Advent*, the four weeks prior to Christmas. It is a season of preparation, waiting, and anticipation. We ready ourselves to celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ in two ways — by recalling his historical birth over 2000 years ago, and by looking ahead to his second coming.

Christmas is both a feast day and a liturgical season. It celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation, the coming of Jesus, the Word made flesh, to earth. Each day of the Christmas season renews the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. The feasts of this brief liturgical season reflect the light of Christ and draw us further into the mystery of the Incarnation.

During the celebration of both Advent and Christmas, the Lectionary readings resound with prophecies, proclamations, and prayers that rejoice in the coming of Jesus, the Savior. Prophets, angels, shepherds, and kings all give voice to the wonder of the coming of the Lord. We, too, have reason to sing: "Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord" (Christmas antiphon).



Suggested Activities

- Divide the class into four groups and invite each one to compose prayers for the weeks of Advent based on themes of the season, such as hope, promise, peace, anticipation, and joy. Use the prayers for the lighting of the Advent wreath.
- Provide materials for the children to make Christmas cards for those who are confined to their homes or extended care facilities during this time of the year. Consult with a parish staff member about taking the cards to a nursing home or to people who are housebound.
- Gather various items, such as a bell, candle, star, candy cane, wreath, angel, and other symbols of the season. Invite the students to talk about the way each one reflects an aspect of the celebration of Advent and Christmas as sacred seasons. Older children can research Christmas customs and traditions and offer a presentation to younger students.



Bright Ideas

To learn about celebrating the seasons of Advent and Christmas, visit **WeBelieveWeb.com**.

Directions

During the Christmas season, the Church celebrates a rich succession of feast days. Invite the children to read about six of these feast days and make and decorate a prayer card to go with each one.



Feast of the Nativity—December 25

The feast of the Nativity celebrates the light that Jesus brought into the world through his birth. Make a prayer card that celebrates the joy of Jesus' birth.



Feast of St. Stephen – December 26

St. Stephen was one of the first deacons of the early Church. He took care of the needs of the poor. Make a prayer card that tells how the love we show others can be like meeting an angel of mercy and kindness.

Feast of the Holy Innocents – December 28

This feast is a day to remember children throughout the world. Make a prayer card that shows what all children of the world need to be safe, happy, and well.



Feast of Mary the Mother of God – January 1

This feast is also the World Day of Peace. What better way to begin a new year than by praying for peace? Make a prayer card that shows what it means to live in peace.



Feast of the Epiphany Second Sunday after Christmas

In the story of the Epiphany, a star guides seekers from far away to the place where Jesus lives with his family. Make a prayer card that shows how God guides us each day.



Feast of the Holy Family—First Sunday after Christmas

Jesus was born into a family who loved and cared for him. Make a prayer card that shows how important it is for families to grow together in love and respect.