

# November GIFT - Home Work

**Families should do the homework for the month BEFORE the GIFT session so that you will be prepared for the session.**

During the 4 weeks just before Christmas, Catholics traditionally celebrate Advent, the season of waiting for Jesus. Even though stores are already filled with Christmas decorations and music, this is a time we hold back, so that our celebration of the true Christmas Season, which begins December 24<sup>th</sup> and lasts until the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after Epiphany, can be more beautiful and meaningful. During the season of Advent, we celebrate an important feast day – Our Lady of Guadalupe and her appearance to Juan Diego.

This session will help us to learn more about the season of Advent and about the call of Juan Diego, and our call during the Advent season.

## 1. Advent

Watch the video and then discuss:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC0FGQLBp7w>

Discuss with your family:

1. What is Advent?
2. How long does Advent last?
3. What colors do we use at church during the Advent season?
4. Why do we celebrate Advent?
5. What special things does your family do during Advent?

*Some Advent ideas for your family are listed at the end of this handout*

**2. Learn about St. John the Baptist – watch or read (or both!)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NMHOLPWeTM>

## Jesus is Baptized by John the Baptist

*by Sharla Guenther*

There once was a man named John the Baptist, who actually was one of Jesus' cousins. He became a preacher and was telling others to ask for forgiveness for things they had done wrong. He wanted to help others change their lives so they could become like a brand new person inside.

He was doing this not to be better than Jesus, but to help Jesus. By preaching to others to feel bad for their mistakes and to ask for forgiveness. By teaching that they needed God in their life he was preparing the people to hear from Jesus himself.

John was a man who wanted to live a very simple life. He felt that having a lot of things wasn't important; instead he traveled the desert and told others about what good things God was doing in his life, and how God could do good things in their lives too.

So John didn't go to a big house every night to eat a big supper and go to sleep in a nice comfortable bed. John didn't have a home and he probably slept outside sometimes. Other nights he may have been invited to stay with friends he made along the way.

For food he ate insects like locusts (which are kind of like grasshoppers); he would find some wild honey to eat with them. Remember, John wanted to live a simple life; he felt like God was all he needed. Nothing else was more important.

When people heard that John was in the area they would come from all over to listen to him and get baptized. Now for some of you, you might not quite understand what baptism is, and that's okay. If you've ever seen someone get baptized, it's sort of like taking a bath with clothes on.

When someone believes in God, baptism is a way of showing others that you believe in Him and want to live your life the way God wants. It's like having a bath to make yourself clean on the inside. When you get baptized, it's a special way of showing that you understand that you have and need God's forgiveness.

When some men named the Pharisees and Sadducees came to listen to John he had a strict warning for them: they needed to feel bad for the wrong things they had done and ask forgiveness for their mistakes. But these men didn't think they were doing anything wrong, they weren't sorry, and so John would not baptize them.

As people were coming to John to be baptized, they were wondering if he was the Saviour they had waited for. John heard what they were saying and he told them, "I am baptizing you now, but very soon someone greater than me will come. He is so great that if He asked me to carry His shoes it would be an amazing honour."

John continued to preach and baptize people until one day Jesus came by to be baptized. John didn't know what to say; all he thought was, "how could I, just a regular man baptize Jesus the Savior of the world?"

John said to Jesus, "You should be baptizing me. I cannot baptize you Lord."

Jesus replied, "It's important that I do this now. I am ready and I want to be an example to others and show them that it's important."

So John took Jesus and baptized Him. He placed his hand on His back and laid him down into the water until He was covered. Then he brought Him back up again. As soon as Jesus was baptized the sky opened up and the Holy Spirit came like a beautiful white dove, and landed right on Jesus shoulder. Then a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, I love him and I am pleased with him."

Just like when Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. When we lie down in the water, we are dying or getting rid of all the bad things we've done. Under the water we are buried. Then when we are brought out of the water we are a brand new person to God.

Baptism is important because Jesus made sure this was the first thing He did when He started His ministry. It is also the last thing He said before going up to heaven. He said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." Matthew 28:19,20

# What is Advent

## When and how long is Advent?

The Advent Season always begins four Sundays before Christmas. The First Sunday of Advent is the beginning of the new liturgical year for the Church.

The Third Sunday of Advent is called "Gaudete Sunday" (from Latin, meaning "Rejoice!"), because the we remember Paul's letter to the Philippians that says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near."

Advent technically ends of the afternoon of Dec. 24.

## What does the word "Advent" mean?

"Advent" usually refers to "the coming of Jesus into the world" or to "the liturgical period preceding Christmas"; it may also refer to the "Second Coming" of Christ (the "Advent of our Lord").

## What are the liturgical colors of Advent?

In the Roman Catholic Church, the official liturgical color for most of the Season of Advent is violet or blue. Only on the Third Sunday of Advent is a rose (pink) colored candle lit, as a symbol of joy.

## What is an Advent Wreath?

Many churches and families prominently display an evergreen wreath with four candles throughout the Advent Season. It is traditionally made of some type or mixture of evergreens, symbolizing the continuation of life in the middle of the cold and dark winter.

Advent wreaths include three blue/violet candles and one pink/rose-colored candle, which are arranged evenly around the wreath

Only one candle is lit during the first week, two in the second week, three (incl. the pink one) in the third week, and all four during the fourth week of Advent; the gradually increasing light symbolizes the approach of Christmas, the birth of Jesus, the light of the world.

Some churches and families add a fifth candle (white) in the middle of the wreath for Christmas Eve or Day; others continue using the same wreath throughout the Christmas Season, replacing the colored Advent candles with fresh candles that are white or gold, symbolizing the arrival of Christ, the light of the world.

## What other liturgical celebrations can occur during the Season of Advent?

- o Dec. 6 – St. Nicholas Day
- o Dec. 8 - The Immaculate Conception of the Mary – a Holy Day of Obligation
- o Dec. 12 - Our Lady of Guadalupe -

# GIFT HOMEWORK

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Use the Scripture, get acquainted with the people who prepared in a special way for the coming of Christ. Look up the quote to find the answer.

WHO AM I?	READ to find	ANSWER
The father of John the Baptist	Luke 1:13	
The angel who told Mary she was to be the mother of Jesus	Luke 1:26	
A famous ancestor of Jesus; a king	Luke 1:27	
Went to visit Elizabeth to help her	Luke 1:39–40	
Husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus	Luke 1:27	
The wife of Joseph and mother of Jesus, the Son of God	Luke 1:26–27	

Respond:

They answered, “Some say that you are John the Baptist. . . . others say that you are Elijah, while others say that you are one of the prophets.” (Mark 8:27–28)

If Jesus were to ask you the same question today, what answers could you give to Jesus regarding who people say that Jesus is?

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In the next verse, Jesus asks, “What about you? . . . Who do you say I am?” (Mark 8:29). Write a brief paragraph answering Jesus’ question. Who do *you* believe Jesus is to you and to the world?

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## Some Ideas for Families during Advent:

1. **Have an Advent wreath.** Don't overcomplicate this. A simple Advent wreath will do. If Advent has already started, that's ok. Just go ahead and put your wreath together, then light the first candle one evening and let it burn down a little. Catching up isn't hard to do.
2. **Stuff shoes for St. Nicholas day (December 6).** (Sorry this idea came a little late for this year- lol) This does not have to be difficult or complicated. Have the kids put their shoes out, tell them the story of St. Nicholas, fill the shoes with goodies. Even just a few cookies in a ziplock baggie will do, although I do like to pick up the bags of chocolate gold coins.
3. **Go to Mass on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8.** Actually, this is not optional since it's a holy day of obligation, but it doesn't involve any prep and it always falls during Advent. Make sure your children understand what this Feast day means- you can use this coloring sheet to help.
4. **Sing Christmas songs.** Stick with the ones you know the words to, and choose the religious ones- Away in a Manger, Silent Night, O Come All Ye Faithful, etc. If you only know the first verse, just sing it several times in a row. Whether you're in the car, or snuggled up in the living room, just go for it- the kids will love it even if you are tone deaf!
5. **St. Lucia (Lucy)'s feast day, December 13- drive around and look at Christmas lights.** This tradition started because her name means "light". What a fun and easy way to celebrate this great feast day! If you aren't feeling up to making saffron buns, you can make easy St. Lucy buns from canned cinnamon rolls.
6. **Celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) or St. Juan Diego (December 9) by eating Mexican food for dinner.** There are lots of ways to celebrate these days, but you have to cook dinner anyway, right? May as well be tacos. If you have a statue of our Lady of Guadalupe, set her on the table as a centerpiece.
7. **Put out a Nativity set.** Put it front and center in your home. Up on the mantel is a great choice. This is an easy way to send a message of what's the most important for this season. If you're looking for an easy nativity craft, my printable nativity set only needs supplies you're sure to already have laying around the house.
8. **Attend confession as a family.** A lot of churches have a big confession service during Advent- utilize it. This is a great way to prepare for the coming of our Savior.
9. **Pray the St. Andrew Christmas Novena with your family.** This is a beautiful tradition. You can add it to your daily prayers, or do this in place of your current family prayers during the Advent season.
10. **Have a Baby Jesus hunt for when you place him in your nativity set on Christmas.** This is one of my favorite traditions, and so easy! Read about how we do this here.