



[If you haven't already, begin your meal with meal prayer, then take turns reading these boxes aloud, following the directions where applicable]

A Season of Advent

The season of Advent is the start of the Catholic liturgical calendar. Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas. Just like you would spend time getting your house ready before hosting a party or getting yourself ready before you meet your favorite celebrity, we spend time preparing our hearts to receive Jesus at Christmas. The word "Advent" means the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.

During Advent, we are remembering and celebrating the time when Jesus arrived on Earth as a baby, because Jesus is the greatest gift we could ever receive! However, during Advent we are also waiting joyfully for a time that has not yet come - the end time when Jesus will come again and when we will be united with him. In Advent, we ask ourselves "When Jesus arrives, will he find our hearts ready for him?"

The Season of Waiting

Advent is often described as a time when we "wait in joyful hope," much like a family might wait joyfully for the birth of a baby. The goal of this life is to reach unity with God - God helps us to do this, and we call his help "grace." The biggest grace God has given us is Jesus - Jesus opened the way to heaven for us. But, God also sends us smaller graces and messages each day while we wait for and work toward heaven.

Psalms 62:1 says "My soul, wait in silence for God alone, for my hope is from Him." Silence is an important part of our daily waiting. It allows us to notice the small graces that God is sending our way. It opens a place in our hearts for Christ to be born in us and dwell within our hearts. God speaks in a still small voice and we need silence in order to hear that voice with the ear of our hearts. When our lives are too busy or noisy, we can't hear God's voice and we miss his presence.

Discussion

[These questions are a spark for conversation, not a strict outline. Allow the Spirit to lead. Try to at least discuss the starred questions each week.]

- Review the Advent practice that you decided to do together as a family this Advent - how is it going so far? (If you haven't chosen or started yet, review the list from last week to begin now - see the last COR packet available at the church or online.)
- Remember a time you felt silence. How does silence feel to you?
- *How much silence do you have each day? What things add noise to your day or take up your attention?
- *Where could you commit to adding silence in your day during Advent? What could you give up to create that silence?

Activity & Prayer

[For this activity section, you will need the additional resource provided by the parish. If you don't have it, you can download it on our website]

To really enter into the Advent spirit of waiting, it helps to stretch our spiritual muscles and actively practice waiting by practicing silence.

Adults, watch the Fr. Mike video listed in the "extras" below, approximately 8 minutes long (parents may find this appropriate to watch with upper elementary students and older as well, but use parental discretion regarding the examples he uses to illustrate his points - if not appropriate for your children, you can summarize his points if you pre-screen or omit this part and skip to the next step).

All ages, use the separate sheet to "make silence" together.

Then, end your time together with a blessing of your advent wreath included in the packet.

Extras

- Listen to Fr. Mike explain why silence is essential:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hHjdtNOwg>
- Read why and how to practice silence:
<https://catholicgentleman.com/2016/07/practice-silence-lay-people/>
- Learn more about Advent as a time of expectant, spacious, hopeful waiting:
<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/three-characteristics-of-advent-waiting/>

Sacramental Life

This week's journal prompt for first reconciliation/communion is:
Jesus said the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself - What is one way you can love your neighbor today? What is one way you can love yourself today?

This week's confirmation work is found at:
<https://staugustinedward.org/confirmation-preparation/>
Complete the short reading and then answer the reflection questions: What is intercession? How will you make prayer part of your daily life?

Looking Ahead

For Next Week, Dec 7:

- See the parish or website for additional handouts and coloring pages
- Items to Gather for next week (optional): Dish soap, pepper, blue or white foods or decor to celebrate Mary

Upcoming Events:

- There will be Mass on Dec 8 for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (a Holy Day of Obligation) at 7:30a.m, 9:15a.m, and 5:15p.m.
- Confirmation AND First Reconciliation/Communion Students - your whole family should plan to attend on Jan 11 6-8 pm at St Augustine for a formation night.

