

TAU CROSS

Memory verse: "Prepare the way of the Lord" Isaiah 40:2

Study Plan: To earn this badge, you will learn about the season of Advent.



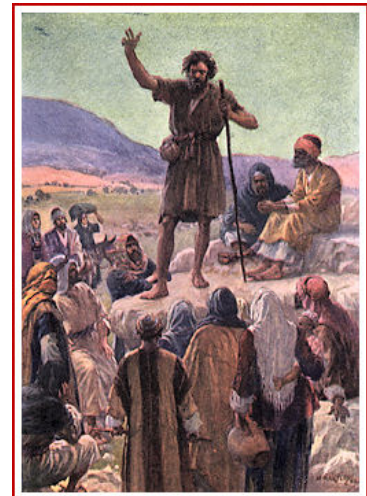
Step 1: What is Advent? Leader's Initials: _____

Advent is the first season of the church year. It begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. This season is a time to prepare for the birth of Jesus; we prepare not only for our celebrations during Christmas, but also our heart and minds and souls for such a great gift. Advent is a season of penitence and of great anticipation.

When we are planning a big event much has to be done to prepare for it. If we were going to have a big family dinner, we would have to decide on the menu, do the grocery shopping, set the table, cook the food, get the house ready; there are lots of things to do! During the season of Advent, we prepare for the coming of Jesus.

John the Baptist announces that Jesus' Ministry is about to begin
Luke 3:1-18

It was the fifteenth year of the rule of Emperor Tiberius; Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip was ruler of the territory of Iturea and Tachonitis; Lysanius was ruler of Abilene, and Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests. At that time the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. So John went throughout the whole territory of the Jordan River, preaching, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins." As it is written in the book 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. The whole human race will see God's salvation!"



Crowds of people came out to John to be baptized by him. "You snakes!" he said to them. "Who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. And don't start saying among yourselves that Abraham in your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham! The ax is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire."

The people asked him, "What are we to do?" He answered, "Whoever has two shirts must give one to the man who has none, and whoever has food must share it."

Some tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what are we to do?" "Don't collect more than is legal," he told them.

Some soldiers asked him, "What about us? What are we to do?"

He said to them, "Don't take money from anyone by force or accuse anyone falsely. Be content with your pay."

People's hopes began to rise, and they began to wonder whether John perhaps might be the Messiah. So John said to all of them, "I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He has his winnowing shovel with him, to thresh out all the grain and gather the wheat into his barn; but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out."



St. John the Baptist Baptizes the People by Nicolas Poussin, 1635. The Louvre Museum in Paris

In many different ways John preached the Good News to the people and urged them to change their ways.



John the Baptist urges the crowds to "get ready" or "prepare".

- How does he answer when the people ask him what to do?
- What are some of the things you can do to get ready for Jesus' birth?
- Some of the ways we get ready to celebrate are "outside" things; we think of our family and friends and make presents for them and we prepare a special meal for Christmas. Some of ways we get ready for Jesus are "inside" things; preparing our hearts to welcome Jesus and living in ways that would reflect God's love for us.
- How do you prepare "outside" and "inside"?



The season of Advent is a time of preparation. One of the most exciting times of preparation is when a new baby is expected in the family.

Do one or more of the following activities:

1. Talk with your parents about how they felt when they were preparing for your birth.
 - What things did your parents do?
 - Did they paint a nursery?
 - Knit or sew clothes for you?



- Borrow clothes and baby things from a relative or friend?
- How did your parents choose your name?
- What were the hopes your parents had for you as they looked forward to your birth?

Look at photos if you have them. Share your photos and answers at your next meeting.

2. Prepare a baby “shower”: Some mothers need help in getting ready for their babies; they cannot afford to buy all the things they would like to have for their new baby. Talk with your priest or deacon about where you can donate your gifts.

- a. Fill a diaper bag with items a mother needs for her baby: baby wipes, small toys, receiving blankets, burp cloths, teething gel, etc.
- b. Make a flannel or fleece blanket.
- c. Make a card to go in the diaper bag.



Step 2: How we observe Advent in the Church Leader’s Initials _____



The church sets aside the four Sundays before Christmas to prepare for the birth of Jesus. This season is called Advent. The word Advent comes from the Latin word, *adventus*, which means arrival or coming. The readings during Advent help us prepare for the “first coming” of Jesus- his birth at Christmas, and for his “second coming” at the end of time. We look forward to Jesus’ birth, and to his coming again; we are asked to consider how we can order our lives, in the light of God’s love, and how we can help bring about God’s reign of justice and peace. The readings focus on three biblical figures; Isaiah, the prophet; John the Baptist, who urges us to prepare the way; and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

An **Advent wreath** can be used to mark the four Sundays prior to Christmas. Advent wreaths are made in a variety of ways. Evergreen wreaths remind us of the continuity of life in a season where so much seems to be dormant. The circle reminds us of the year and the promise of God that spring will always come. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. The candles may be all purple or all blue, or three purple or blue and one pink.



One candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent; two candles on the second Sunday, and so on. The pink candle is lit on the third Sunday; the opening words for that day traditionally began with “Rejoice!” Your congregation may have some worship materials for you and your family to use with your Advent wreath.

A **Jesse tree** reminds us of some of the Biblical stories that tell of God’s love and compassion. Each day one symbol is added to the tree, and, as you put the symbol on the tree, you can read and talk about what that symbol represents.

Jesse was the father of David; in Isaiah 11:1, we read, “The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David’s descendants.”



The primary “decoration” in our churches during Advent is the Advent wreath. We generally do not put up Christmas symbols, such as Christmas trees, poinsettias, and the like, until Christmas Eve.

- How is this different from what we see all around us?
- Why do you suppose we do this?



Do at least 3 of the following activities:

1. Find out the date Advent starts this year.
2. Find out what color your church uses during Advent. Some churches use purple vestments and hangings; purple was a royal color in ancient times, and to use purple during Advent reminds us that we are getting ready to welcome the King. Purple is also a color of penitence, a reminder that we need to prepare our lives for Jesus. Some churches use the color blue, symbolizing heaven and also the color associated with Mary.
3. Make an Advent wreath.
4. Make a Jesse Tree. Many resources are available for making a Jesse tree, both in books and online. *Let’s Make a Jesse Tree!* by Darcy James gives both patterns and the stories of each symbol.



A Jesse Tree made from felt.



Paper symbols hung on a branch.

Step 3: The O Antiphons (optional) Leader's Initials _____

Evening Prayer is one of the liturgies in our Prayer Book. It includes the *Magnificat*, The Song of Mary, which is said after the reading of the lessons. On the seven days before Christmas, the **Great O Antiphons** are said before and after the *Magnificat*, one for each day. Each of the antiphons is a title for the Messiah, drawn from the prophet Isaiah.

The hymn *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, is a version of the great O Antiphons. Each verse invites, longs for, Jesus to come, using a different name in each verse: Emmanuel, Wisdom, Lord of Might.

Let's look at them. They each have a Latin name.



O Sapienti - O Wisdom

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.

Isaiah 11:2-3: The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight has been in the fear of the Lord.



O Adonai - O Eternal Lord

O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

Isaiah 33:22: For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us.



O Radix Jesse - O root of Jesse

O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer: come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

Isaiah 11:1: A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.



O Clavis David O Key of David

O Key of David and scepter of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open: come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Isaiah 22:22: I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open.



O Oriens - O Morning Star

O Morning Star, splendor of light eternal and sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Isaiah 9:2: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land a deep darkness—on them light has shined.



O Rex Gentium - O King of Nations

O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay.

Isaiah 9:6: For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests on his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



O Emmanuel - O Emmanuel

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Savior: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Isaiah 7:14: The Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a child and shall name him Immanuel. (The word Immanuel or Emmanuel, two different spellings for the same word, means “God with us”.)



- As you read these antiphons and the Old Testament prophecies from which they are taken, can you hear the great longing for the Messiah?
- As you think about the birth of Jesus, what expectations do you have?
- What hopes?



In the spaces below, write the first letter of each of the antiphons (not the O, but the word after that), starting with the last and going to the first.

The two words you came up with, *ero cras*, are Latin for “Tomorrow, I will come!” Remember that these antiphons are being said or sung at the end of Advent, ending the day before Christmas. And Jesus says, “Tomorrow, I will come!”

Do one of the following:

1. Take one of the antiphons (perhaps each one in your group could take a different one, and then you can share.) Read both the antiphon and the Isaiah quote, then either write a paragraph or a poem about what you have read and experience, or draw what you see in it.
2. Sing or read Hymn 56, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Notice the dates next the verses, specifying the dates on which each antiphon is sung.