

## FAMILIES FORMING DISCIPLES

### GRACE AND HOLINESS IN FAMILY LIFE

**TOPIC:** PRAYERFULLY PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS & GRACE AND HOLINESS IN FAMILY LIFE

#### SACRED SCRIPTURE

IS 9:5-6

MT 1:18-25

LK 1:28; 2:1-21

#### REFERENCES:

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
nos. 525-526

#### CREED

nos.

456-69,  
490-93,  
525-26

#### LITURGY

nos.

1077-83,  
1115-31,  
1213

#### LIFE

nos.

1997,  
2205

#### PRAYER

nos.

2676,  
2742-45,  
2779-85

#### Goal(s):

- *Lectio Divina* and Family Rosary: Families will be introduced to and guided in an Ignatian meditation on the Third Joyful Mystery of the Birth of Our Lord
- Families will learn about and celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, reflecting on the presence of grace and the call to holiness in family life
- Families will learn about and prepare Advent/Christmas symbols in their homes

#### MATERIALS

- Parishes may provide an Advent Wreath Kit to be completed during the Week 2 At-Home Mission Activity, or parishes can ask families to provide their own Advent Wreath, or a candle with their own Nativity Set.
- If parishes are emphasizing the Advent Wreath, parishes should provide 1 Family Advent Wreath Prayer booklet/pamphlet per family (or offer an online resource that could be printed)
- Families bring towels, mats, and/or individual chairs for the Scripture meditation “Going to the Holy Land with Jesus”
- Bible for Ignatian meditation

#### CATECHIST PREPARATION

- Tell families to bring towels, mats and/or chairs
- Watch the videos *Praying with the Bible & Praying with Imagination*
- Although the meditation that will be introduced today will not be exactly as described in the video, it will help the catechist to understand the focus of the prayer activity.



PRAYING WITH  
IMAGINATION



## PRAYER

### Advent Prayer for Families

Heavenly Father, your Son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us, a great sign of your love. Guide us as we strive to walk in that love together as a family this Advent. Help us to do our Family Advent Plans. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, bring us closer to each other and to your Son. Give us the grace and strength we need every day. Help us to always trust in you. Come, Lord Jesus, lead all people closer to you. Come and dispel the darkness of our world with the light of your love. Amen.

<https://dynamiccatholic.com>

## ICE BREAKER

Ask each family to write down as many Advent and Christmas traditions as they can within 1 minute. Have the family that has the most read their list. Then invite the other families to share anything that they had on their lists that was different.



## TEACH

### 1. Hook/Question

Name one or two of your family's favorite Christmas traditions.

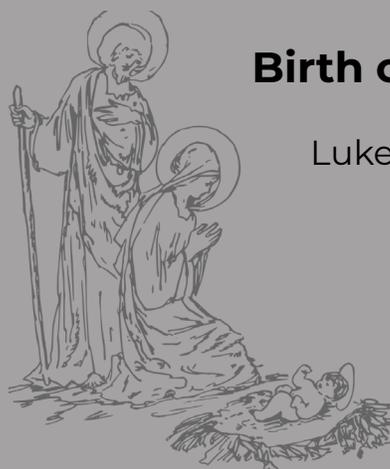
(Let families discuss among themselves, and then invite sharing with the larger group)



### 2. Introduce Topic

#### Birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-20



### 4. CONTENT

#### Going to the Holy Land with Jesus

(Encourage families to bring a towel, exercise mat or chair for each family member).

**Ask** all the family members to find a comfortable place to sit (or lie on their towel or mat), close their eyes and relax. Breathe slowly in and out, while picturing Jesus sitting in their midst.

# CONTENT

**Explain:** Today we are going to imagine that Jesus is showing us the cave where He was born (note: ancient tradition connects our Lord's birth to a cave, which is the site of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem; caves were sometimes used in Jesus' time to shelter flocks and care for animals). We are going to reflect on the event of the Birth of Our Lord, which is the Third Joyful Mystery of the Rosary.

I am going to ask you to quietly relax as I say a prayer and then read the story of the Birth of Our Lord to you from Sacred Scripture. While I am reading, I would like you to use your imagination, like St. Ignatius of Loyola taught us, and to place yourself there in the story. Think about what you see, hear and even what you smell. This is a special way to pray, and for us to meet God.

When I have finished reading we will sit in silence for a minute and think about what God is saying to you through this story.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, as we read and think about the story of your life, we ask the Holy Spirit to come and speak to the hearts of all here, from the oldest to the youngest.

**Calmly Read** Luke 2:1-20.

**Wait** at least 30 seconds.

**Ask:** Think about what you saw. What did Jesus show you? What it was like to be there with the Holy Family, Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus?

**Wait** at least 30 seconds.

**Explain:** Now open your eyes and sit up. I invite each member of your family to share privately about what he/she saw or thought about in the Mystery of the Birth of Our Lord that we just read.

Review Guidelines:

- a. Respectfully listening to each family member as he/she is sharing their reflection is very important.
- b. Avoid interrupting or even correcting what another is saying (we're looking to listen, not critique).
- c. When each family member has had an opportunity to share his/her reflections on the Birth of Our Lord, signal by raising your hand.
- d. Please continue to sit quietly while we wait for the other families to finish.

**Give** families time to share privately.

## 5. MISSION

### Step 1: Introduce Mission Activity

Mission Activities are to be done at home during Week 2 and to be shared at the gathering of families on Week 3

### Step 2: Explain Activity:

- a. Model for families by showing them the Advent Wreath, or your candle and Nativity scene that you have set up on your prayer altar/space.
- b. Share why this Advent/Christmas symbol is important to you and your family.
- c. Share that there are short videos on Advent/Christmas traditions for them to view and learn more.

### Step 3: Homework

Ask families to watch *Immaculate Conception* (2 min video) and be ready to answer two simple questions at Week 3's gathering of families.

- Who is the Immaculate Conception?
- What does Immaculate Conception mean?

Before closing, ask: When do Catholics celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception? (December 8, which will be either soon after this session or before)

## 6. REVIEW & CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, You entered our world on Christmas as the Prince of Peace. This Advent, as we strive to live out our baptismal call to holiness and follow You more faithfully, fill us with a deep and abiding peace. Help us share that peace with everyone we encounter, especially those who need it most. Amen.

Adapted from [Dynamic Catholic](#)

Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, and Immaculate Heart of Mary, patroness of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, pray for us!

# SUPPORTING QUOTES FROM CHURCH DOCUMENTS

**Bl. Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854); see CCC, no. 491:**

“The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.”

***Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 526 (notes omitted):**

“To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become ‘children of God’ we must be ‘born from above’ or ‘born of God.’ Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us.”

**Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate* (2018), no. 32:**

“Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self.”

