

Why does Jesus come to save us?

Lesson 22

Advent

*"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation:
the old things have passed away;
behold, new things have come."*

2 Corinthians 5:17

ENCOUNTER 193

Gathering Prayer

Leader: Bless us this Advent as we wait in joyful hope for your coming to us.
We celebrate this season by preparing our homes and our hearts. Each
Sunday, another candle in the Advent wreath is lit. On the Fourth
Sunday of Advent, the four lights for each week give off your light.
We wait in joyful hope for your coming to us, Lord Jesus.

All: We wait in joyful hope for your coming to us, Lord Jesus.

Leader: "A voice proclaims:

In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD!" (Isaiah 40:3).

All: We wait in joyful hope for your coming to us, Lord Jesus.

Leader: "Every valley shall be lifted up,
every mountain and hill made low" (Isaiah 40:4).

All: We wait in joyful hope for your coming to us, Lord Jesus.

Leader: "Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:5).

All: We wait in joyful hope for your coming to us, Lord Jesus.

Leader: Lord Jesus, prepare in our hearts the path of your return.

All: We wait in joyful hope for your coming to us, Lord Jesus.

Activity

The Church celebrates Christmas on December 25. But in many places the "holiday spirit" begins much earlier. As a class, discuss ways you can take part in the holiday spirit while still keeping Advent as a time of penance and prayer.

Our hearts look forward to the coming of Christ.

In the Nicene Creed, we profess our faith. We say that we believe that Jesus “will come again in glory.”

The season of Advent is that time of the year when we remember and celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ will come again in glory. No one knows the day or the hour when Christ will return. Therefore, we must be ready to meet him whenever he comes, our hearts filled with wonder, love, and praise.

Many people are fearful when they think about the end of the world. It will be a time of great turmoil and destruction. Yet believers can be confident that Christ will gather all who believe in him together and protect us from all harm. We need never be afraid.

We know that the world is not eternal. It had a beginning, and it will have an end. The account of creation assures us that God is the source of the world’s beginning. The New Testament assures us that when Jesus comes again in glory, he will reign over all things. The end of time, as well as its beginning, is in the safe hands of the Creator, God the Father.

Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year. Yet the First Sunday of Advent emphasizes the coming of Jesus at the end of time. Does it not seem strange that at the beginning of a new liturgical year, the readings for Mass speak about the end of the world?

The liturgy reminds us every year that we are on a journey together. Advent is the start of each new liturgical cycle. In Advent, we look ahead, with joy-filled hope, to the birth of Jesus Christ and remembering his coming in glory that is to come at the end of time. His birth and second coming are good news for all God’s faithful.

Did You Know?



Jesus is here—be not afraid.



Advent

Activity

Advent means “coming.” Ask two or three friends why Advent in the Church does not mean waiting for Christmas but waiting for the coming of Jesus. Summarize their answers and present your results to the class.

Readers Theater

Joseph's Dream

Roles:

Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Narrator 3, Joseph, Angel

*Joseph faces a difficult decision when he finds out that Mary is pregnant.
An angel helps him to decide.*

Narrator 1: This is an account of how Joseph became aware that Mary would give birth to Jesus. It was during the time when Joseph and Mary were betrothed.

Narrator 2: "Betrothed" was the first stage of marriage during the time of Joseph and Mary. It was like being engaged.

Narrator 3: Mary was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph did not yet fully understand what this all meant.

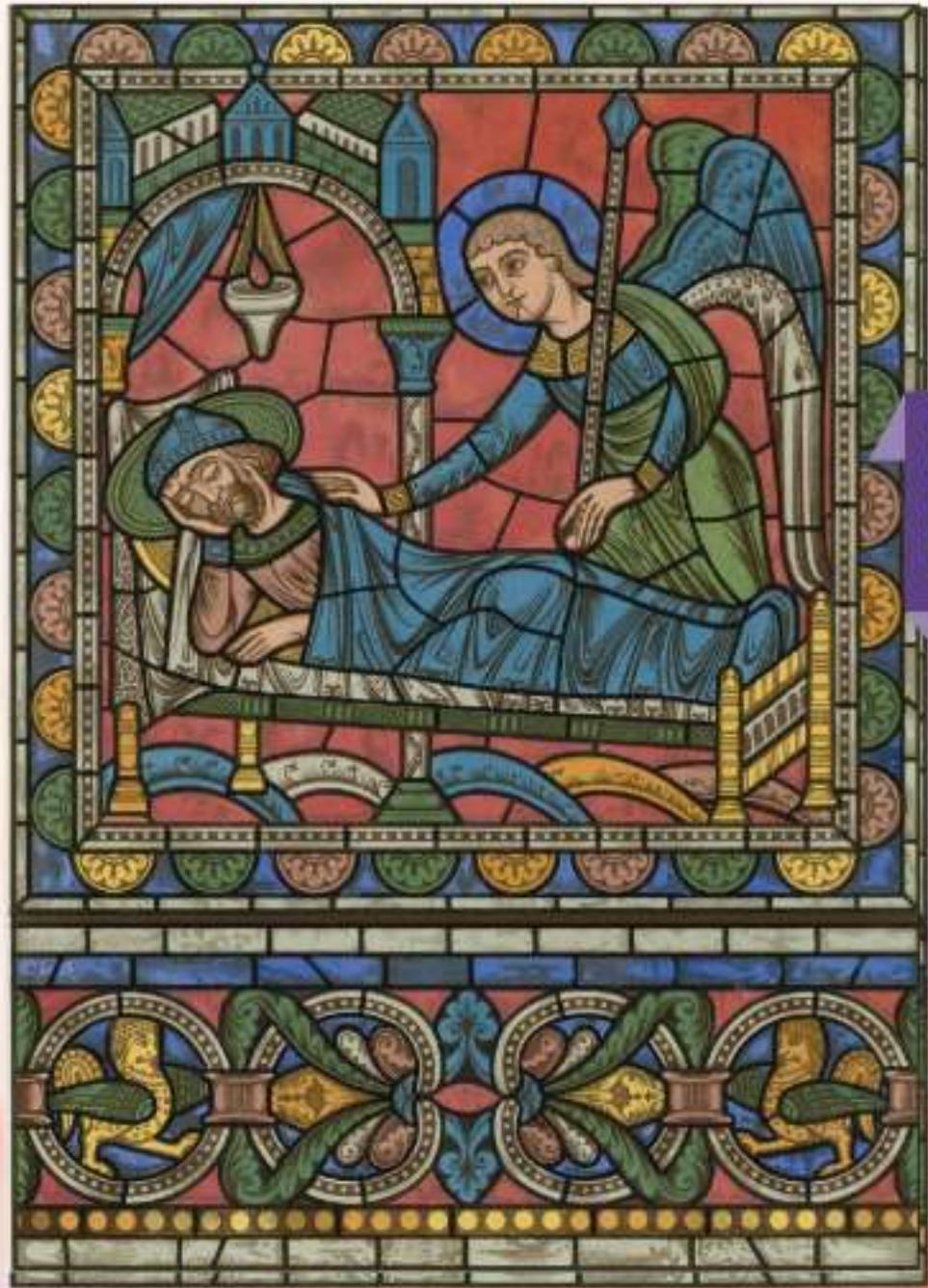
Joseph: I love Mary and want to protect her. But when people find out that she is pregnant and we are not yet married, she will be shamed. It would be better for her if I leave.

Narrator 1: As he was thinking of all of this, he fell into a deep sleep.

Narrator 2: Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream!

Angel: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21).

Narrator 3: When Joseph woke up, he did all the angel of the Lord told him to do.



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The Dream of Saint Joseph, 19th-century lithograph by Emile Beau

Lesson 22
Portfolio

How do I look forward to the coming of Christ?

Mini-Task

Advent begins the liturgical year. During the season of Advent, we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus. Jesus, whose name means "God saves," is the long-awaited Savior. It is fitting that the first season of the liturgical year helps us to remember the hope that Jesus would bring to God's people.

Compare and connect the meaning and experience of Advent to an event in your life.

Compare and Contrast Chart Graphic Organizer

1. _____ 2. _____

How are they alike?

How are they different?

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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Want to do more? Go to your Portfolio to continue this activity.

At Home

Talk with your family about a family event or occasion you are looking forward to. Pray together that the beginning and end of this event or occasion will go well for your family.

How did the Son of God
enter human history?

Lesson 23

Christmas



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*"And the Word became flesh . . .
and we saw his glory."*

John 1:14

Encounters

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Gathering Prayer

Leader: This Christmas, let us celebrate the gift of Jesus, the gift of love. As we gather at Mass to sing carols and hymns of the season, let us offer prayers of thanksgiving to God for the gift of Jesus, his Son. God loved us so much that he became one of us. Through Jesus we have come to know the love of God the Father.

Jesus, Prince of Peace, we give glory to your name!

All: Jesus, Prince of Peace, we give glory to your name!

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are Word Made Flesh. We give glory to your name!

All: Jesus, Prince of Peace, we give glory to your name!

Leader: Christ Jesus, you are Wonder-Counselor. We give glory to your name!

All: Jesus, Prince of Peace, we give glory to your name!

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are Light from Light, true God from true God!

All: Jesus, Prince of Peace, we give glory to your name!

Leader: Christ Jesus, you were begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father!

All: Jesus, Prince of Peace, we give glory to your name!

Activity

The prayer above gives some names used to describe Jesus Christ. In groups, brainstorm ideas for what each name tells us about Jesus. Share with the whole group.

Name for Christ	What does this name tell us about Jesus?
Prince of Peace	
Word Made Flesh	
Wonder-Counselor	
Light from Light	



At Christmas we celebrate the Incarnation.

The Gospel according to John does not tell the story of Jesus' birth as it is told in the Gospels of Matthew or Luke. Instead, John offers a beautiful, poetic hymn to the Incarnation. He writes:

"In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God." (John 1:1)

John goes on to talk about the Son of God as "light" coming into the world. Finally, he says:

"And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

This passage, which is the reading for the Mass During the Day on Christmas, tells us something very important about what we celebrate.

This Scripture reading shows that Christmas is, above all, the feast of the Incarnation: that Jesus, the Son of God, was born like us in all things but sin. The Word was made flesh. God's Word, in an act of grace, became flesh through the Virgin Mary.

The Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, was present with the Father and the Holy Spirit even before creation. God has no beginning. Through the Incarnation, the Son of God became man.

The Incarnation strengthens Catholics in the belief that God works through the material world rather than remaining far apart from it. The physical world, although imperfect and full of suffering, is still a place to encounter God's presence.

The Incarnation shows us that we must respect everyone. Because God's Son took on human flesh and dignified it by becoming one of us, we know that our own bodies and those of others are made in the image of God.

Did You Know?



God uses physical things to explain spiritual mysteries.

Christmas

Activity

The word *incarnation* comes from the Latin, meaning "to make flesh." It refers to Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, taking on a human nature. List three reasons why it is important to our faith that the Son of God became man.

Using these reasons, write a brief poem, paragraph, or song to share with the group. If you write a song, you might want to use a Christmas carol for the melody.

Readers Theater

Shepherds at the Birth of Jesus

Roles:

**Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Narrator 3, Narrator 4,
Shepherds (2 or 3), Heavenly Host, Angel**

Glory to God in the highest.

Narrator 1: In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus declaring that the whole world should be enrolled.

Narrator 2: This meant that all family members had to travel to their own town to be counted.

Narrator 3: So Mary, who was with child, and her husband, Joseph, went up from the town of Nazareth to the city of David called Bethlehem.

Narrator 4: Joseph was of the house and family of David.

Narrator 1: While Mary and Joseph were there, the time came for Mary to have her child, and she gave birth to Jesus.

Narrator 2: She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them to stay at the inn.

Narrator 3: At the same time, shepherds who lived in fields outside Bethlehem were keeping watch on their sheep all night. All was quiet.

Narrator 4: Then suddenly an angel appeared to them. The glory of God shone all around them! The shepherds were very afraid.

Shepherds: What is happening?

Angel: "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" (Luke 2:10–12).

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

Narrator 1: The shepherds were amazed.

Narrator 2: They hurried to see this baby whom the angels
sang about.

Narrator 3: The shepherds went back to watching their sheep.

Narrator 4: But they wanted to tell everyone about the baby Jesus.



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The Adoration of the Shepherds, 1534, by Lorenzo Lotto

Christmas

How has my world been changed by the birth of Jesus?

Mini-Task

During the Christmas season, we celebrate that God became man in the Incarnation of Christ. Christmas is a time of peace and joy. It can be a time of healing for families and groups of people as we all celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Compare and connect the meaning and experience of Christmas to an event in your life. What and how do you celebrate in each?

Compare and Contrast Chart Graphic Organizer

1. _____ 2. _____

How are they alike?

How are they different?

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
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Want to do more? Go to your Portfolio to continue this activity.

At Home

Ask your family members to tell about some ways they see Jesus' presence in the world. Talk about ways you see his presence in one another.