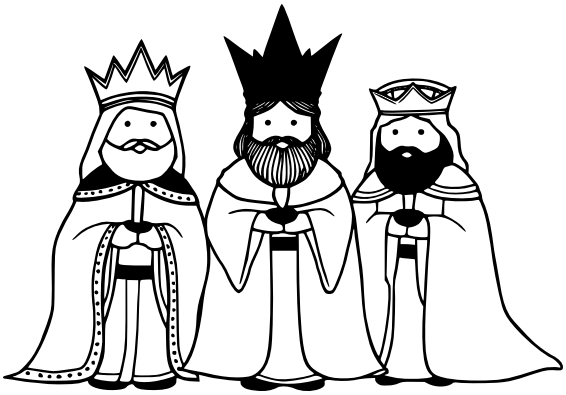
ADVENT AT HOME

A Family Prayer Book



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Introduction



The word Advent comes from Latin and means “coming.”
It is the time when as Christians we prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ and it lasts for the four weeks leading up to Christmas.

A beautiful tradition that helps us live this time well is the Advent wreath. It is made of green branches and has four candles: three purple and one rose.

We light one candle each Sunday of Advent until we reach Christmas. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday and represents joy. When lighting the candles, families often say a prayer, read a passage from the Bible, and sing together.

We do this at Mass during Advent, but it’s also wonderful to do it at home — before or after dinner, for example. If you don’t have candles of these colors, you can still make your Advent wreath and pray! What matters most is its meaning: the light that grows brighter as the birth of Jesus draws near, for He is the Light of the World. You can also bring your wreath to church to be blessed by the priest.

The Meaning of the Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is full of beautiful symbols that help us understand this special season.

The circular shape: The circle has no beginning and no end. It reminds us of God's eternal love, which never ends, and of our love for God and others, which should also never end.

The green branches: Green is the color of hope and life. God wants us to wait with hope for His grace, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. Our greatest desire should be to grow closer to God, our Father.

The four candles: The candles remind us of the darkness caused by sin, which separates us from God. After the fall of Adam and Eve, God slowly began to reveal His plan of salvation — a light that grew brighter throughout the centuries until Jesus, the true Light, came into the world. We light one candle each Sunday of Advent as we pray together as a family. Each candle makes the light grow stronger, just as the world grew brighter with the coming of Christ.

The red ribbon: The red ribbon represents our love for God and His love for us, which surrounds and holds us together.

Let us join the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph with a sincere desire to let go of everything that keeps Jesus from being born in our hearts.



First Sunday of Advent

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, today we prepare our Advent wreath and light the first ***purple*** *candle.We recognize You as the Light of the world, who has triumphed over darkness and death. Amen.*

Blessing of the Wreath

Lord our God, bless this Advent wreath with Your power and love.
May its light awaken in us the desire to wait for Christ's coming by doing good works, so that when He comes,
we may be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.
All: *Amen.*

Person Who Lights the Candle

Lord, we light this candle as one who lights a lamp to go out inthe night to meet a friend who is coming.
In this first week of Advent, we want to rise and be ready to welcome You with joy.
So many shadows surround us, and so many comforts make us fall asleep.
Keep us awake and watchful, Lord, for You bring the brightest light, the deepest peace, and the truest joy.
Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus!



Gospel Reading

Cycle A: Matthew 24:37-44
Cycle B: Mark 13:33-37
Cycle C: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Reflection

During this first week, the Gospel invites us to stay watchful
as we await the coming of the Lord.
As a family, let us make a small resolution that helps us move
forward on our journey toward Christmas.

What if we take some time to look at our relationships within the family?
Let's seek forgiveness from those we may have hurt and offer forgiveness
to those who have hurt us—so that Advent may begin
in an atmosphere of harmony and love.

Quote to Reflect On

*"You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running,
to work by working; and just so, you learn to love by loving."*
— St. Francis de Sales

*"To forgive with one's whole heart and with no trace of a grudge will always
be a wonderfully fruitful disposition to have! That was Christ's attitude on being
nailed to the Cross: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they are doing."
From this came your salvation and mine."*
— St. Josemaria Escrivá

Prayers and Petitions

Child Jesus, I ask that there be no room in my heart for resentment.

Blessed Virgin Mary, teach me not to judge, not to think badly of others,
and never to speak ill of anyone.

Saint Joseph, help us remain calm in these days and, like you,
learn to contemplate the Child Jesus.

Story: The Little Feather Mattress

Every year, as Christmas approaches, Alex changes completely.
He studies hard, listens to his parents, helps his mother,
and becomes gentle and kind.
His mother is amazed. So are his father and siblings.
No one knows his secret, only God. But God keeps it quiet.

When Alex was five years old, he was his grandmother's favorite.
They would talk and pray together. One day, close to Christmas, his grandma
told him how Baby Jesus was born, not in a warm bed like other babies,
but in a manger, in the middle of winter. The little boy listened with eyes
full of tears. When she finished, he sighed deeply and whispered,
"Poor Baby Jesus! Born without a mattress or a blanket... and He's God!"
"Would you like to make Him a soft bed and some fine linen cloths?"
his grandmother asked. "Oh, I'd love to, Grandma!" he answered,
eyes wide like two bright windows.
"But how could I?"
His grandmother smiled. "Listen carefully," she said.
"If each day you make a few little sacrifices,
you can make Him a feather mattress. And if you pray a lot,
you'll make Him linen cloths.
There are still four weeks before His birth, plenty of time to get ready."
That was the secret God gave Alex through his grandmother.

A few days later, she went to Heaven. Alex cried so much.
No one told him stories or prayed with him before bed anymore.
And now he had no one to guide him with his little sacrifices.
After thinking for a long time, he remembered something Grandma had said:
"Good people go to Heaven." So he told himself,
"Grandma must be watching from Heaven to see if I'm making the little
mattress and cloths for Baby Jesus."

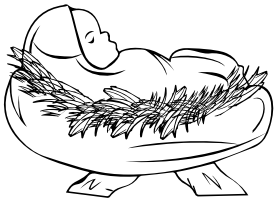
When his mother placed the four Advent candles in the living room and
lit the first one, Alex began collecting his "feathers" and praying
extra for the linen. At first, it wasn't easy. How could he make a sacrifice?

One day, while playing soccer, one of his friends, Diego, kicked the ball hard into his ribs. Alex was about to punch him back when he suddenly heard a quiet voice deep inside say: "Don't get even. Offer that pain for Me." Then he understood: those little victories were the feathers! And that one was a big, soft feather!

That afternoon, his godmother gave him a chocolate lollipop. Without thinking twice, he offered it to his little sister. "Another feather!" he said happily. The next day, when he came home from school, he did his homework right away, skipped TV, and helped his mom wash the dishes, something he never liked doing. His mom, seeing him so helpful, gave him five dollars. His uncle gave him ten more for his good grades. Alex didn't spend a single dollar. He wanted to turn everything into feathers for Baby Jesus.

By the end of the second week, right before the third Sunday of Advent, Alex had collected thirty-nine feathers. Would that be enough for a soft mattress for Baby Jesus? He went to his sister Nicole's room, took out the little mattress from her doll's bed, opened the stitching, and began to count the feathers. What a disappointment! Not even a quarter full! "With so few feathers, Baby Jesus would still be cold and His little body would hurt!" From that moment, only one thought filled his heart: "More feathers!"

He became the best classmate, the best brother, the best son. And what about the linen cloths? Alex started praying more. He even went to weekday Mass! When he looked at the picture of Baby Jesus on his bedroom wall, he would say over and over, "My heart is Yours, Jesus."



Finally, Christmas Day arrived.
Alex knelt before the Nativity scene his father had made.
He gazed with wonder at Saint Joseph, the Virgin Mary, and the shepherds.
Nearby was his little red car and his spotted toy horse.
But what hurt his heart was seeing Baby Jesus lying on straw.
With tears in his eyes, he whispered,
"Poor Jesus... lying on hay..."
Then, with a big smile spreading across his face, he said,
"But in my heart, there are so many feathers to keep You warm...
and linen cloths too! Come into my heart!"
He leaned forward to lift the Baby in his hands.
Some say the Child smiled at him.

(Adapted from Gabriela Kast, "Cuentos de Adviento," Ed. Palabra, Madrid.)

Reflection

This story reminds us that Jesus doesn't need gifts of gold or silver,
He wants our hearts filled with kindness, prayer, and little sacrifices.
Every time we are patient, generous, or forgiving, we give Him another
"feather" for His little bed.

Family Resolution

Each of us will choose one small resolution for the week,
something to help us grow in love for Jesus and others.

*We give You thanks, O Lord, for bringing us together to prepare
for Your coming into the world.*

To finish, let's pray together an ***Our Father, Hail Mary,*** *and* ***Glory Be****.*

Repeat three times together:
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

(Optional: End with a family song or carol.)

Second Sunday of Advent

All: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we gather once again as a family around Your manger.
We want to keep nurturing the longing for Your coming.
We light the second ***purple*** *candle as a sign of the conversion we are called to live.*

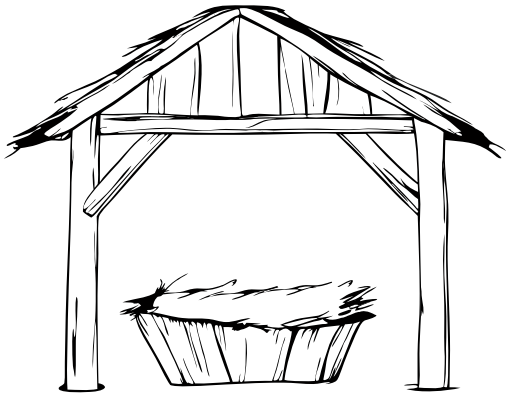
Blessing of the Wreath

Lord God, bless our Advent wreath with Your power, so that as we light it,
it may awaken in us the desire to await Christ's coming by practicing good works.
Grant that when He comes, we may be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.
All: *Amen.*

Person Who Lights the Candle

Lord, as we light this candle, we ask You to increase our faith.
Help us always feel safe knowing that You guide our lives with love and mercy.
Give us the courage to say at every moment of our lives:
Jesus, I trust in You! Amen.



Gospel Reading

Cycle A: Matthew 3:1-12
Cycle B: Mark 1:1-8
Cycle C: Luke 3:1-6

Reflection

This second week of Advent, the liturgy invites us to reflect on the words of John the Baptist: "*Prepare the way of the Lord*." (Luke 3:4)
And what better way to prepare than by seeking reconciliation with God?
Last week, we reconciled with those around us. Now the Church invites us to take the next step, to go to the Sacrament of Confession,
where we recover the friendship with God that sin had weakened.

Quote to Reflect On

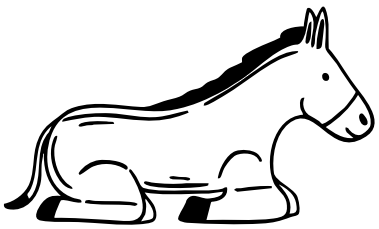
""Don't be afraid of telling the Lord that you love Him,
and that you want to love Him even more!" — St. Josemaría Escrivá

"Jesus does not demand great actions from us,
but simply surrender and gratitude."
— St. Therese of Lisieux

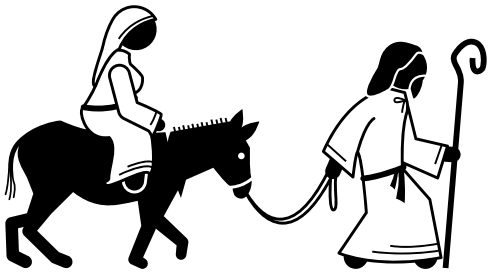
Prayers and Petitions

Lord Jesus, help me not to offend You,
and may I never be the cause of Your pain.

Virgin Mary, take away my shame and lead me to Confession,
so that my soul may be as pure and beautiful as Yours when I receive Baby Jesus.



Story: Mary's Dream



"I had a dream, Joseph... I couldn't quite understand it,
not completely, but I think it was about the birth of our Son.
Yes, I believe it was about that.
Everyone was making preparations six weeks ahead of time.
They were decorating their homes and buying new clothes.
They went out shopping many times and bought elaborate gifts.
It was very peculiar, because none of the gifts were for our Son.
They wrapped them in beautiful paper and tied them with lovely ribbons.
Then they placed them all under a tree.
Yes, Joseph, a tree, inside their homes. They were decorating that tree too.
Its branches were full of ornaments and sparkling decorations.
At the very top there was a figure, I think it was a star or an angel.
Oh, it was truly beautiful!
Everyone seemed so happy and full of joy.
They were excited about the gifts,
and they exchanged them with one another, Joseph,
but not a single one was for our Son.
You know, I don't think they even knew Him.
They never once mentioned His name. Isn't it strange, Joseph?
All that effort to celebrate the birthday of someone they don't even know.
I had the strange feeling that if our Son had gone to one of those celebrations,
He would have been an intruder — unwanted, out of place.
Everything was so lovely, Joseph, and the people so happy...
yet I felt an overwhelming sadness.
I wanted to cry for Jesus —
how sorrowful it must be not to be wanted at your own birthday.
I'm so glad it was only a dream...
but oh, Joseph — how terrible it would be if it were real!

(Adapted from Gabriela Kast, "Cuentos de Adviento," Ed. Palabra, Madrid)

Reflection

Mary's dream reminds us how easy it is to prepare for Christmas
and forget the One we're truly celebrating.
The lights, gifts, and decorations are beautiful,
but they only have meaning if they point to Jesus.
Let's make sure our homes and hearts are ready
to welcome Him with love. This year, may our greatest gift be time
spent in prayer, kindness, and gratitude for the Jesus who is born for us.

Family Resolution

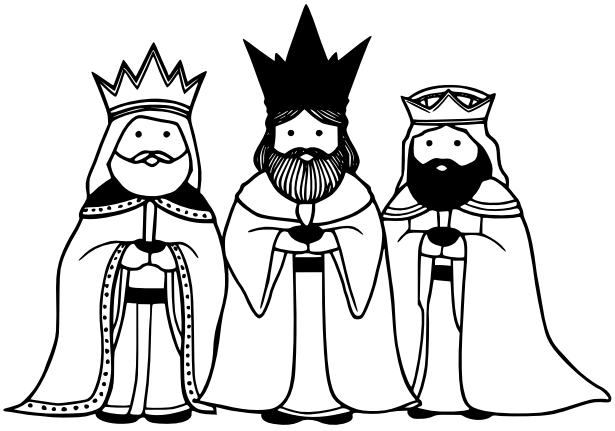
Each of us will choose one small resolution for the week,
something to help us grow in love for Jesus and others.

*We thank You, Lord, for gathering us once again to prepare
our hearts during this Advent season. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Let's close together with one ***Our Father***, ***Hail Mary,*** *and* ***Glory Be.***

And let us repeat three times:
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give You my heart and my soul.

(Optional: End with a family song or carol.)



Third Sunday of Advent

All: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, Your coming is near, and this Third Sunday You invite us to joy,
to rejoice in all the wonders You are going to bring into our lives
with Your arrival. Today we light the third candle of the wreath,
the ***rose*** *candle, as a sign of our joyful anticipation.*

Blessing of the Wreath

We want to continue preparing our hearts with longing, so that it may be
the best little cradle where we can place You on Christmas Eve.
We know how important peace in the heart is.
Help us to forgive, recognize our mistakes, and let our love
surpass human limits.

Through Christ our Lord.
All: *Amen.*

Person Lighting the Candle

Child Jesus, we light this third candle to express the immense joy
we feel at the nearness of Your Birth.
We turn to Your Mother to ask, with much longing, that she brings
peace to the world, the peace the angels announced
and sang to the shepherds. Amen.



Gospel Reading

Cycle A: Matthew 11:2-11
Cycle B: John 1:6-8, 19-28
Cycle C: Luke 3:10-18

Reflection

On this Third Sunday of Advent, the Church invites us to keep in mind the figure of Mary, who prepared to be the Mother of Jesus and was always ready to help those in need, as she did with her cousin Elizabeth. This week we can propose fostering devotion to Mary, praying the Rosary as a family, and repeating short prayers throughout the day.

Quote to Reflect On:

"Mary's heart was a living Advent, always ready, always joyful, always waiting for God." — St. John Paul II

"To be full of joy is to carry God within you." — St. Elizabeth of the Trinity

Prayers and Petitions

Child Jesus, may all of us here today let ourselves be touched and embraced by You.

Holy Spirit, grant us the grace and the light to recognize that this Child is God, God who becomes a child out of love.

Virgin Mary, may everyone we meet take away Your gaze and Your joy.



Story: The Best Christmas Gift

(Adapted from a true story shared by American missionaries in Russia, 1994)

In 1994, two Americans were invited by the Russian Department of Education to teach moral and ethical lessons based on biblical principles in public schools. They were asked to visit a large orphanage, home to about one hundred children who had been abandoned. As Christmas approached, the teachers decided to tell the children, for the very first time, the traditional story of Christmas. They shared how Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem, how there was no room at the inn, and how baby Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger.

The children and orphanage workers listened with amazement. Many sat at the edge of their stools, their eyes wide, hanging onto every word. When the story ended, the teachers gave each child three small pieces of cardboard to build their own little manger. Each child also received a small square of yellow paper, torn from napkins the teachers had brought, to serve as straw. For blankets, they used pieces of flannel cut from an old nightgown donated by a woman from America. Finally, a small baby shape was cut from tan felt to represent the Baby Jesus. The children eagerly set to work, carefully building their mangers. As the teachers walked around the room, everything seemed to be going well, until one of them reached a little boy named Misha, about six years old. Looking into his manger, the teacher noticed something surprising: there were two babies inside.

With the help of a translator, the teacher asked Misha why. Misha folded his arms and looked down at his completed manger. Then, very seriously, he began to repeat the story of Christmas, remarkably accurate for someone who had just heard it once, until he reached the part where Mary laid the Baby in the manger. Then Misha added his own ending: "When Mary put the baby Jesus in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked if I had a place to stay. I told Him I didn't have a mother or a father, so I didn't have anywhere to go. Then Jesus told me I could stay with Him. But I said I couldn't, because I didn't have a gift to give Him like everyone else. I wanted so much to stay with Jesus that I thought about what I could give. I thought, maybe if I keep Him warm, that could be my gift.

So I asked Jesus, 'If I keep You warm, would that be a good gift?'
And Jesus said, 'If you keep Me warm, that would be the best gift anyone has ever given Me.' So I got into the manger, and Jesus looked at me and said I could stay with Him — forever."
When Misha finished his story, tears ran down his cheeks.
He covered his face with his hands and sobbed.
That day, little Misha found Someone who would never abandon him or hurt him. Someone who would stay with him forever.

Reflection

Little Misha's story reminds us that Jesus came for hearts just like his, simple, tender, and full of love. When Misha offered to keep Baby Jesus warm, he gave the most precious gift of all: his heart.
This Christmas, may we remember that Jesus doesn't ask for anything big or perfect, He just wants our love, our kindness, and a place in our hearts where He can stay forever.

Family Resolution

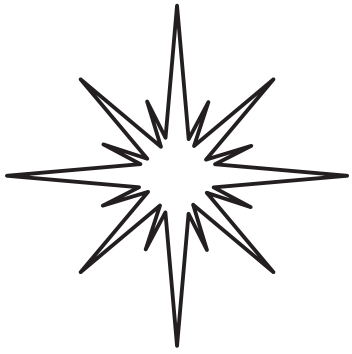
Each of us will choose one small resolution for the week, something to help us grow in love for Jesus and others.

We thank You, Lord, for bringing us together to prepare our hearts for Your coming into the world.

To finish, let's pray together an ***Our Father***, ***Hail Mary***, *and* ***Glory Be.***

Repeat three times together:
Jesus, Joseph, and Mary, I give You my heart and my soul.

(Optional: End with a family song or carol.)



Fourth Sunday of Advent

All: *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Opening Prayer

Today we light the fourth ***purple*** *candle to remind us that the family should live in harmony, brotherhood, and joy, the values this celebration represents.*

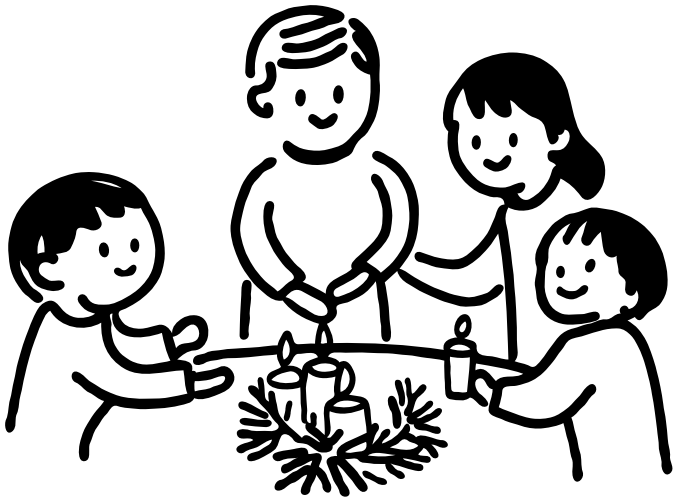
Blessing of the Wreath

Lord God, bless our Advent wreath with Your power so that, as we light it,
it awakens in us the desire to wait for the coming of Christ,
practicing good works, so that when He comes,
we may be admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
All: *Amen.*

Person Lighting the Candle

Lord Jesus, Son of Mary, we light this fourth candle to express
the immense joy we feel as we approach the manger.



Gospel Reading

Cycle A: Matthew 1:18-24
Cycle B: Luke 1:26-38
Cycle C: Luke 1:39-45

Reflection

The readings of this fourth week focus on the openness and disposition of the Virgin Mary upon the announcement of the birth of her Son. They invite us to learn from Mary and follow Christ, who is the Light of the World. All preparations for this feast should take place in an atmosphere of love and simplicity.

Quote to Reflect On:

"*Heaven is for those who know how to be happy on earth.*"
- St. Josemaria

"If we have God in our hearts, we will have everything we need for Christmas." — St. John Vianney

Prayers and Petitions

Child Jesus, we ask for those who suffer most, for the poor and the sick.

Virgin Mary, help us to receive the Baby Jesus with the same love with which You received Him.

Dear St. Joseph, may the Star of Bethlehem also shine in our home.



Story: The Greatest Gift

Amanda was sitting, looking at the mountain of gifts under the tree.
Her mother entered and asked, "What are you thinking about, Amanda?"

Amanda replied, "I was wondering which of these is the best gift."

Her mother said, "Amanda, the value of gifts is not measured by size, color, price, wrapping, or even usefulness.
The value of a gift is measured by the heart."

"By the heart? Mommy, gifts don't have hearts."

"Amanda, gifts do have hearts..."

"No, mommy, look," she said, taking a gift to her ear,
"listen, mommy, I don't hear any heartbeat."

"Oh, Amanda! Gifts do have hearts. It's the heart of the person giving the gift that extends into the gift itself. When someone gives you a gift out of obligation, it reaches you without heart; but when someone gives a gift with all their heart, that heartbeat is in the gift, and that is its true value."

Amanda smiled and said, "Uhhh, then I need to make another gift, because the one I have for Ben and Martin doesn't have a heart."

Her mother smiled and said, "You see, no human has ever received a gift more valuable than the one God gave us. He gave us His only Son, and He gave Him with all His heart, so that you could now have a living, vibrant heart. Do you understand?" "Really?" asked Amanda.
"Of course. That is why you must love this gift with all your heart, because it brings the heart of God. Live with this gift, and for this gift."
"Yes, mommy," said Amanda, "I will."
And she ran off to play with Ben and Martin.

Have you seen Jesus as the greatest gift in your life?
Do you live for Him and with Him? This is a perfect day to understand the heart of God and have the best gift.



Reflection

Amanda's story reminds us that the best gifts don't come in shiny paper or big boxes, they come from the heart. God showed us the greatest love when He gave us His Son, Jesus, as a gift for all of us. Jesus is the heart of Christmas, the gift that never fades or breaks. This Christmas, may our gifts, our smiles, our hugs, our kindness, carry a little bit of God's love inside them.

Family Resolution

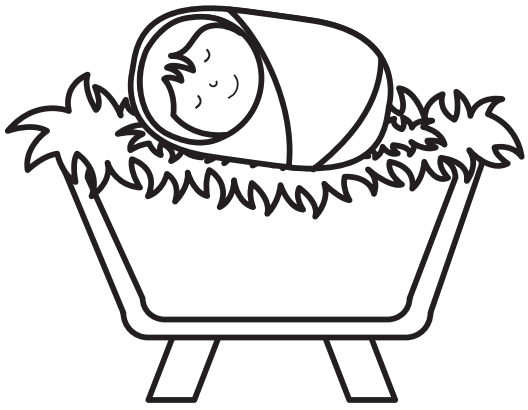
Each of us will choose one small resolution for the week, something to help us grow in love for Jesus and others.

We thank You, Lord, for bringing us together to prepare for Your coming into the world.

Let us pray together: ***Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be***

Repeat three times:
Jesus, Joseph, and Mary, I give You my heart and my soul.

And a spiritual communion prayer:
"I wish my Lord to receive you, with the purity, humility and devotion with which your Most Holy Mother received you, with the spirit and fervor of the saints." - St. Josemaria



A Christmas Eve Reflection

Tonight the light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born.
It is the great announcement that moves Christians on this day and, through them, reaches all of humanity. God is here.

This truth must fill our lives: every Christmas should be for us a new and special encounter with God, allowing His light and grace to enter the depths of our soul.

Just as the Star of Bethlehem guided the wise men to Jesus, may we always ask for that same light to guide us — in our choices, in our homes, and in our hearts — so that we never lose sight of Him. May every day be a new journey toward His presence, trusting that He is our true North, shining quietly and faithfully above all thing

"*Oh Mary, Mother of Jesus,*
You who have welcomed, teach us to welcome;
You who have adored, teach us to adore;
You who have followed, teach us to follow."
— Pope Francis

Amen.

