



A 45-55 Minute Mini Catholic Retreat
Dedicated to Large Families or Groups

Opening Prayer

All: *Begin with the Sign of the Cross.*

God, our father, as we begin this retreat, we invite Your Holy Spirit to guide our hearts and minds. Through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of God, help us to prepare for our journey through Advent with faith, hope, and trust. May

we follow Mary's example of openness and courage, preparing for the coming of Christ with joyful anticipation. Grant us Your grace as we walk together, seeking to grow closer to You in this holy season. Amen.

Reader 1: Pope Francis once said, "Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem. May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man."

During Advent, we prepare for His coming – He who brought Light into the darkness – for four weeks, represented by the four candles around the Advent wreath. But, instead of going through Advent with the thought of Jesus, we are switching it up and asking Mary, His mother to guide us. She was the one who said, "Yes" to the God and carried Jesus to Bethlehem.

Mary's Role in Advent

Reader 2: Read Luke 1:26-38, the Annunciation, where the Angel Gabriel visits Mary.

Discuss, Meditate and Share

- ◆ Discuss Mary's courage and openness to God's plan.
- ◆ Meditate on how Mary's "Yes" can inspire us to say "Yes" to God in our own life.
- ◆ Share ways that you can be more open to God's call in your life, just as Mary was?

Walking with Mary

Leader: Close your eyes and imagine walking alongside Mary as she journeys through Advent.

Picture Mary as a very young woman filled with hope and trust. Imagine her anticipation and joy as she prepares for the birth of Jesus. As a family, recreate the scene and put on short skits, beginning with #1 below and read the description given to you by the leader. (The last pages of the Leader's Guide have explanations of each category listed below, to make it easier.) Use your imagination and consider using props that you have around your home.

- 1) The Annunciation of Mary
- 2) The Annunciation of St. Joseph
- 3) Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth
- 4) Travel 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to find a room
- 5) The Nativity

After the skits, allow a few moments of silence for personal meditation and prayer.

Why We Have Advent Wreaths

Reader 3: When and where was the first Advent wreath made? (Pause for guesses.) The original Advent wreath was a wooden wagon wheel created in Germany in 1839, featuring 20 red candles for weekdays and four white candles for Sundays before Christmas. It helped children countdown to Christmas, much like an Advent Calendar.

Advent wreaths and candles are often seen in Catholic Churches during Advent. Many people also display them in their homes and light a candle each Sunday.

Reader 4: The Advent wreath symbolizes the anticipation and hope for the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Lighting each of the four candles marks the weeks leading up to Christmas. The wreath's circular shape represents eternity and everlasting life in Christ, and the evergreen leaves symbolize continuous life.

Each Sunday, a candle is lit and, we focus on a different theme:

1. The First Sunday of Advent is a purple candle which represents: Hope
2. The Second Sunday of Advent is a purple candle which represents: Peace
3. The Third Sunday of Advent is a pink candle which represents: Joy
4. The Fourth Sunday of Advent is a purple candle which represents: Love.

Lighting the candles each Sunday adds a little more light and that symbolizes Jesus is the light of the world.



Meditate and Share:

- ◆ Do you have or have you seen an Advent wreath before today?
- ◆ If so, what did you think of it?
- ◆ How did it make you feel?

Closing Prayer

Recite the "Hail Mary" together, with each person placing their Advent prayer intention.