



A 45-55 Minute Mini Catholic Retreat for Youth

Opening Prayer

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

Loving 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.

Reflection on 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.

Break out into Groups and Play it Out

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. In smaller groups prepare and put on a short skit. Each group is assigned to a different subject below. (The last pages of the Leader's Guide have explanations of each category listed below, to make it easier.)

- 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 Do 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: An Advent wreath helps us to prepare for Jesus's birth by focusing on a different theme each week: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. The wreath's circle represents God's everlasting love, and the evergreens symbolize everlasting life. Lighting the candles each Sunday adds a little more light to the darkness as Christmas approaches, symbolizing Jesus as the light of the world.

Meditate and Share:

- ◆ Do you have or have you seen an Advent wreath?
- ◆ 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.