



FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

Here is a guide to assist your family in talking about the Sunday readings. Keep these cards handy wherever they are most likely to be seen and used before and after church. Examine the readings (or the homily) for images or vocabulary that trigger reactions. What's important is that you have the chat together. Follow your conversations wherever they might lead.

KEY TO THE CONVERSATIONS

-  Key Idea: Reflection on a central idea in the readings
-  Take 30 (Seconds): A pause to reflect or pray in silence
-  Share: A time for each family member to share
-  Pray: A suggested moment for prayer



ADVENT/ CHRISTMAS 2009 YEAR C

Take a few moments each week as a family to read, reflect upon, and talk about the Sunday readings. Keep these materials in an easily accessed place, perhaps on your dining room table, in the car, or on your bedside table. Use the following reflections to start a family conversation centered around God's Word. Encourage family members to share other questions or comments based on the readings. Though these conversations your family is being led by the Holy Spirit to break open God's Word today.

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**First Sunday of Advent
November 29, 2009**

Jer 33:14-16; 1 Thes 3:12-4:2;
Lk 21:25-28, 34-36

GOSPEL HIGHLIGHT: Lk 21:36—"Be vigilant at all times and pray."

KEY IDEA: We have heard it said that Advent is a time to be watchful and alert. In the coming weeks the Advent readings will echo the theme of watchfulness and vigilance. As we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation, a central mystery of the Christian faith, the Word of God calls us to vigilant watching and prayer. This Advent spirit of prayerful anticipation prepares the soil of our hearts and minds to receive the coming Word of God made flesh. Living in watchfulness and prayer during Advent may be a challenge, given the hectic pace and commercialism of the season.

TAKE 30 (SECONDS): Reflect or pray in silence.

SHARE: Why is this Advent time of spiritual preparation and prayer important? What is our concrete response—personally and as a family—to the invitation of God's Word to prayer and watchful waiting? What distractions will we, as disciples of Christ, need to set aside to make Advent a meaningful time of spiritual preparation and prayer? What concrete form will our family prayer take this Advent?

PRAY: (Repeat each phrase after the leader.) "To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. / Guide me in your truth and teach me, / for you are my God my savior, / and for you I wait all the day" (Ps 25:1-5).

TAKE 30 (SECONDS): Reflect or pray in silence.

SHARE: Pray the words of the Hail Mary together. Then ponder the prayer's meaning and Mary's unique role as the Mother of God. How has this period of Advent preparation helped you to better appreciate the members of your family? How is Mary's example of faith and trust in God's Word a model for you personally and for your family?

PRAY: (Repeat each phrase after the leader.) "God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unfraid. / Cry out with joy and gladness; for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel. / Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement. / Shout with exultation, O city of Zion, for great is your midst; is the Holy One of Israel!" (Is 12:2a, 5a, 6).

**Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 20, 2009**

GOSPEL HIGHLIGHT: Lk 1:45—"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

KEY IDEA: The hustle and bustle of the season now reaches fever pitch. Christmas cards, decorating, and holiday shopping hold our attention and drain our energies. Soon our Advent preparations will be fulfilled in Christmas celebrations. The Gospel draws us even closer to the mystery of faith we have prepared for and now eagerly await. Christ, the Son of God, is born into our world. Like Elizabeth and the baby who stirred in her womb, we are surprised by the sheer generosity of God's gift in the Incarnation of his Son. As we contemplate the approaching feast with the eyes of faith—like Mary who believed what was spoken to her—the blessings of Christmas overflow into our homes, our hearts, and our lives.

PRAY: (Have family members respond as indicated.) Let us pray for those in our community who are in need. Let each member of the family offer the names of those in need of prayer or of material or spiritual help this Advent. Let us pray for the strength and the perseverance to reach out in love and service to those in need.

**Second Sunday of Advent
December 6, 2009**

Bar 5:1-9; Phil 1:4-6, 8-11; Lk 3:1-6

GOSPEL HIGHLIGHT: Lk 3:4—"A voice of one crying out in the desert: / 'Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths.'"

KEY IDEA: In anticipating the celebration of momentous events—such as the birth of a child, a wedding, or a special birthday or anniversary—we often go to great lengths to make adequate preparations. As we continue our Advent journey, we are reminded of one biblical figure whose entire life was spent in preparing the way of the Lord. He is John the Baptist, who even in his mother's womb rejoiced in the coming of the Lord, and who prepared hearts and minds for his coming into the world. John the Baptist is the perfect saint for Advent. He reminds us that, through our daily thoughts, words, and actions, we too prepare the way of the Lord for others. This Advent saint invites us to

joyfully anticipate and prepare others for the coming of the Word made flesh.

TAKE 30 (SECONDS): Reflect or pray in silence.

SHARE: Who in your parish, neighborhood, or community needs a helping hand, an encouraging word, or some other thoughtful outreach during this Advent season? How can you prepare the way of the Lord this Advent by being attentive to those in need? Name one person in your family, workplace, neighborhood, or faith community who nurtures your awareness of the presence of the Lord in the ordinary circumstances of life.

PRAY: (Repeat each phrase after the leader.) The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy. / Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing. / Although they go forth weeping, they shall come back rejoicing. / The Lord has done great things for us, we are glad indeed (see Ps 126:3, 6a, 6c, 3).

**Third Sunday of Advent
December 13, 2009**

Zep 3:14-18a; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-11

GOSPEL HIGHLIGHT: Lk 3:10-11—"The crowds asked John the Baptist, 'What should we do?' He said to them in reply, 'Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.'"

KEY IDEA: Many of the questions posed in the Gospels are profoundly human questions. They reflect the deepest desires of the human heart and our human longing for God. In today's Gospel the crowds press John with a fundamental question about discipleship. What should the life of a disciple look like? How should a disciple of the Lord treat others at home, act towards those in need, and behave in the workplace? These questions confront every Christian disciple in every age. And as we continue our Advent preparations, the Word of God encourages us to share our spiritual and material goods with

those in need. In a season marked by excessive commercialism and material consumption, we are reminded of our countercultural witness as Christians.

TAKE 30 (SECONDS): Reflect or pray in silence.

SHARE: How can sharing with those in need during Advent better prepare you to receive the gift of the Incarnation at Christmas? How will your family concretely respond to Jesus' invitation to the crowds, tax collectors, and soldiers in the Gospel? Discuss one work of charity or service to those in need that your family can carry out this Advent.

PRAY: (Have family members respond as indicated.) Let us pray for those in our community who are in need. Let each member of the family offer the names of those in need of prayer or of material or spiritual help this Advent. Let us pray for the strength and the perseverance to reach out in love and service to those in need.