

PREPARING FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT!

THE ADVENT WREATH HELPS US AS WE GET READY TO WELCOME JESUS

Light has always been a symbol of hope in the darkness. Long before Jesus was born, we know that the people of Eastern Europe made wreaths of evergreen branches and added lighted candles as a sign of hope in the dark days of winter. This was a reminder to them that spring was on its way. In the northern European countries, lights were placed on wheels and prayers were offered to the god of light to turn the wheel of the earth back towards the sun. By the 1500s, Christians had adapted this tradition and were using Advent Wreaths as part of their preparation for Christmas. In the 17th century, the Advent Wreath was used throughout Germany to mark the time spent waiting for the birth of the Christ child at Christmas. From Germany, this tradition spread to the rest of the world.



WHAT DOES THE ADVENT WREATH MEAN?

Usually, the Advent Wreath is made of four candles, three purple and one pink. The candles remind us that Jesus is the light that has come into the world. (John 3:19) We use four candles to represent the four weeks of Advent. The colour purple is used because, long ago, purple dye was very expensive and purple became a colour that was associated with royalty. Advent is the season of the coming of the King. The pink one is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete Sunday*, which means Joyful Sunday or the Sunday of Rejoicing. We rejoice because we are more than half way through our preparation for Christmas. Long ago, Advent was a time of fasting, like Lent. On the Third Sunday, there was a break from this fast and the priests wore rose or pink coloured vestments. So that tradition became a part of the Advent Wreath. As we light the candles each week, we are made aware of our journey through this season. Placing the candles in a circle is symbolic of God's love for us, a love that has no beginning or end. The use of the evergreen leaves around the candles reminds us that God's love is everlasting.

HOW TO MAKE A SIMPLE ADVENT WREATH

There are lots of different ways to make an Advent Wreath. The following is a very simple art and craft activity for use with all age groups.

MATERIALS

Cardboard ring about 28 cms in diameter
4 candles; 3 purple, 1 pink
4 bottle caps
Green crepe paper
Glue

1. **Cut out a cardboard ring** of around 28cms in diameter. You can **colour** the ring green or use green strips of crepe paper to wrap around the ring, making sure to overlap the layers as you go.
2. **Glue the bottle caps to the bottom of the cardboard ring.** This will make a stand for the wreath.
3. **Glue on green shredded paper.** You might like to add some pine cones, holly or other decorations. *These are optional!*
4. **Glue the base of the candles to the wreath and make sure that they are very secure.** Use tall and thick candles that will last the season through.

HOW TO USE THE ADVENT WREATH

Place the Advent Wreath in your **Classroom Sacred Space**. Light the candles during prayer time for the four weeks of Advent. Candles are lit in the following sequence:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Week 1: | Light ONE Purple Candle |
| Week 2: | Light TWO Purple Candles |
| Week 3: | Light TWO Purple Candles & ONE Pink Candle |
| Week 4: | Light ALL Four Candles |



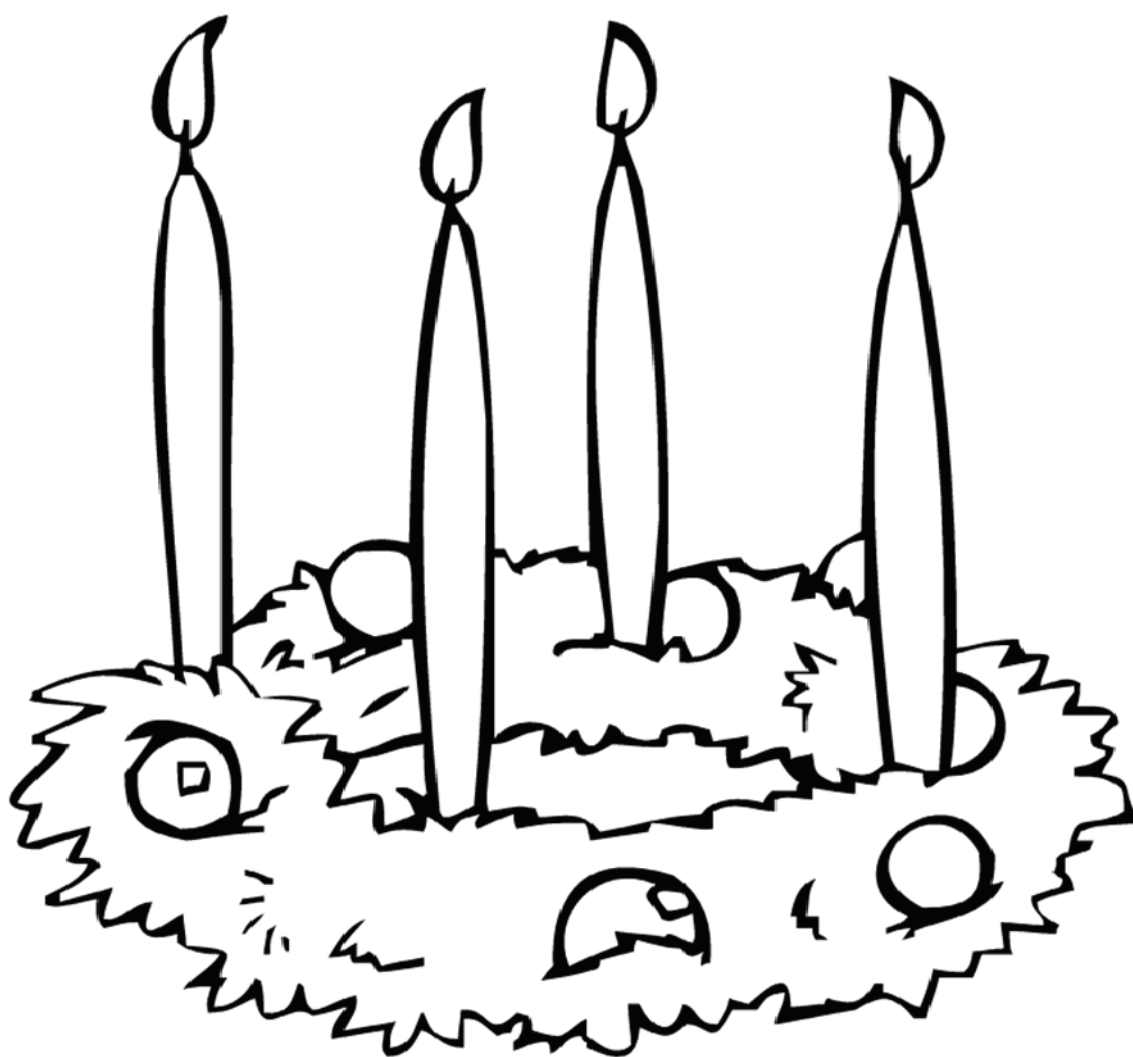
BLESSING FOR THE ADVENT WREATH:

You might like to invite the priest or chaplain to bless your Advent Wreath at the beginning of Advent. The following prayer may be used. Holy Water can be used to sprinkle and bless the wreath



*Loving God, bless our Advent Wreath.
May its light be a sign of Christ's coming, warming our hearts and
brightening our way as we journey towards Christmas Day. Amen*

Colour the Advent Wreath



Count the candles. Circle the right number

1 2 3 4

What colour are the candles?

Advent Calendar



Photocopy and cut out each of the Advent activities below and place them in a basket on the sacred space. Invite a different child every day to (a) select an activity for the class to do and (b) colour a star on the calendar opposite (start with number one). This can also be done as an individual activity for home or school – simply photocopy these pages for each child in the class.



Help your family to prepare a meal

Invite someone who has been left out to play with you

Say a prayer of thanks before eating your dinner today

Put some food out for the birds

Make a special effort to be patient at times when you have to wait

Visit a Church and ask for help to light a candle

Say “I’m sorry” to someone whom you’ve hurt or upset

Tidy your room without being asked

Say a prayer before bed tonight

Reuse or recycle your Christmas card envelopes

Phone or write to your Granny or Granddad today

Tell someone your favourite Bible story

Make a birthday card for Jesus and leave it beside the crib

Ask what you can do to help prepare your house for Christmas

Say a prayer for every person who sends a Christmas card to your family

Give a special hug to someone who takes care of you and say thank you to them

Pick up any litter in your school yard or around your house

Read the story of the Annunciation (Luke 1:28-38)

Share your sweets or toys with someone

Say a prayer for the people you know who have died

Make a Christmas card for someone who helps you in your school

Save all the used stamps from your Christmas cards and give them to charity

Read the story of the first Christmas (Luke 2:1-14)

Forgive someone who has hurt your feelings

Donate a toy to the local charity

ADVENT

A New Year for the Church

FACTS ABOUT THE CHURCH YEAR

- The Church year begins on the first Sunday of Advent and ends on the Feast of Christ the King.
- The Church year is divided into different seasons just like the calendar year.
- We can tell which season we are in by the different coloured vestments that the priest wears when celebrating Mass



In Advent the priest wears **purple**, the colour of royalty. This reminds us that we are waiting to welcome Christ, the King.
The same colour is worn during Lent.



White or gold vestments are worn for the seasons of Christmas and Easter, times of great joy in the Church Year. These colours are also worn for the Feasts of Our Lord, such as the Baptism of The Lord and for Feasts of Mary such as the Immaculate Conception, which we celebrate during Advent.



In Ordinary Time the priest wears **green**. **Green** is a symbol of life and hope.



Red, the colour of blood, is worn on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, those days when we celebrate the passion of Jesus. **Red** is also the colour of fire which reminds us of the Holy Spirit. So, **red** vestments are worn on the Feast of Pentecost and for the sacrament of Confirmation.

The Church Year is also called the Liturgical Year.

There are **three Liturgical Years A, B, and C**. In each of these three years we hear the story of Jesus', birth, life, death and resurrection told from the point of view of the different writers of the Gospel.

In **Year A** most of the Gospels are from Matthew, in **Year B** from Mark and in **Year C** from Luke.

John's Gospel can be heard in all three years mostly during the Easter Season.

This year in Advent we begin **Year A!**

CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES

A Reflection for Teachers

During the course of the First World War, my grand-Uncle was fighting with the North Staffordshire Regiment on the Western Front. No-one knows why a soldier who had enlisted with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers had ended up with this British Regiment. During the Christmas of 1915 an unusual event happened – an unofficial Christmas truce. I don't know if he was there, but I'd like to think he was – seeing in the midst of a terrible war, a small moment of humanity and Christian goodness. By the following Christmas he would be dead, having died at the Somme in November 1916. The history of the Regiment tells the following story:

The 24th and 25th December 1914, saw the extraordinary spectacle of an unofficial truce between our troops and the Saxons who were opposite. Everything had been normal up to evening 'Stand down' and the Company Commander was having his supper in the Headquarters dug-out, when the Company Sergeant-Major put his head in and said 'What am I to do, Sir? The Germans are sitting on their parapets, lighting candles and singing hymns!' The Company Commander at once went out and mounting on the fire step saw small lights all along the German trenches and heard many voices uplifted in song.

He decided to consult with the Officer Commanding 'A' Company, who was the Senior Officer in the front line, and accordingly started to make his way down the trench towards 'A' Company Headquarters. On his way he surprised one of his men in the act of climbing out of the trench and discovered that there was a German soldier in 'No man's land,' who wanted to speak to a British soldier, so ordering his own man back, he slipped out himself to investigate.

The German turned out to be a private soldier who had been a waiter at Brighton, and was anxious to exchange cigars for bully beef. The Company Commander asked to be taken to an Officer, and was conducted to the German front line, where he found a group of German Officers standing by the wall of a ruined farmhouse. Christmas greetings were exchanged and finally the suggestion was made that Christmas Day might be observed as a day of rest and that the Infantry should not fire on each other, though of course, neither side could answer for their Artillery. It was then agreed that all Infantry fire should cease forthwith and that the informal truce should continue until 12pm on Christmas night.

The German spokesman then asked for permission to bury the dead. Burial parties then went out from both sides, leaving their trenches at 10am on Christmas Day, each side to bury the dead in their own half of 'No man's land.'

During all this time sufficient men were kept posted in our trenches to check any attempt at treachery and to prevent any of the enemy entering our trenches. The Germans evidently took the same precautions, for when Captain Ewald tried to get a peep into their front trench, he was promptly warned off by an invisible sentry. At dusk the men of both sides returned to their trenches, but no hostile act followed the expiry of the truce at 11pm.

Shortly after 'Stand down' next morning 'C' Company Commander was informed that a German Officer wishes to speak to him in 'No man's land'. On going out he found a very polite and spotless individual awaiting him, who, after an exchange of compliments, informed him that his Colonel had given orders for a renewal of hostilities at mid-day and might the men be warned to keep down, please? 'C' Company Commander thanked the German Officer for his courtesy, whereupon, saluting and bowing from the waist, he replied, 'We are Saxons; you are Anglo Saxons; word of a gentleman is for us as for you.'

The troops were duly warned to keep down, but just before hostilities were due to re-open a tin was thrown into 'A' Company's lines with a piece of paper in it bearing the inscription, 'We shoot to the air' and sure enough, at the appointed hour a few vague shots were fired over the trenches. Then all was quiet again and the unofficial truce continued.

John Paul Sheridan





THE JESSE TREE

The Jesse tree is like the family tree of Jesus. Its name comes from Jesse, who was the father of King David. Jesse and King David were ancestors of Jesus. The Jesse tree shows us more of the important people in the Old Testament. It shows us how long they waited for a king. We know that Jesus is the king that God promised to send. We use the Jesse Tree to remind us of God's promise.

CAN YOU FIND JESUS' ANCESTORS IN THE BIBLE?

Look in your Bible to find the names of Jesus' family. Write each name in the spaces below. Then match the person to the symbols at the side.

Genesis 3:20	
Genesis 7:1	
Genesis 22:1	
Exodus 19:20	
Ruth 2:2	
2 Samuel 5: 3	
Luke 3:16	
Matthew 1:24	
Luke 1:38	
Matthew 2:2	

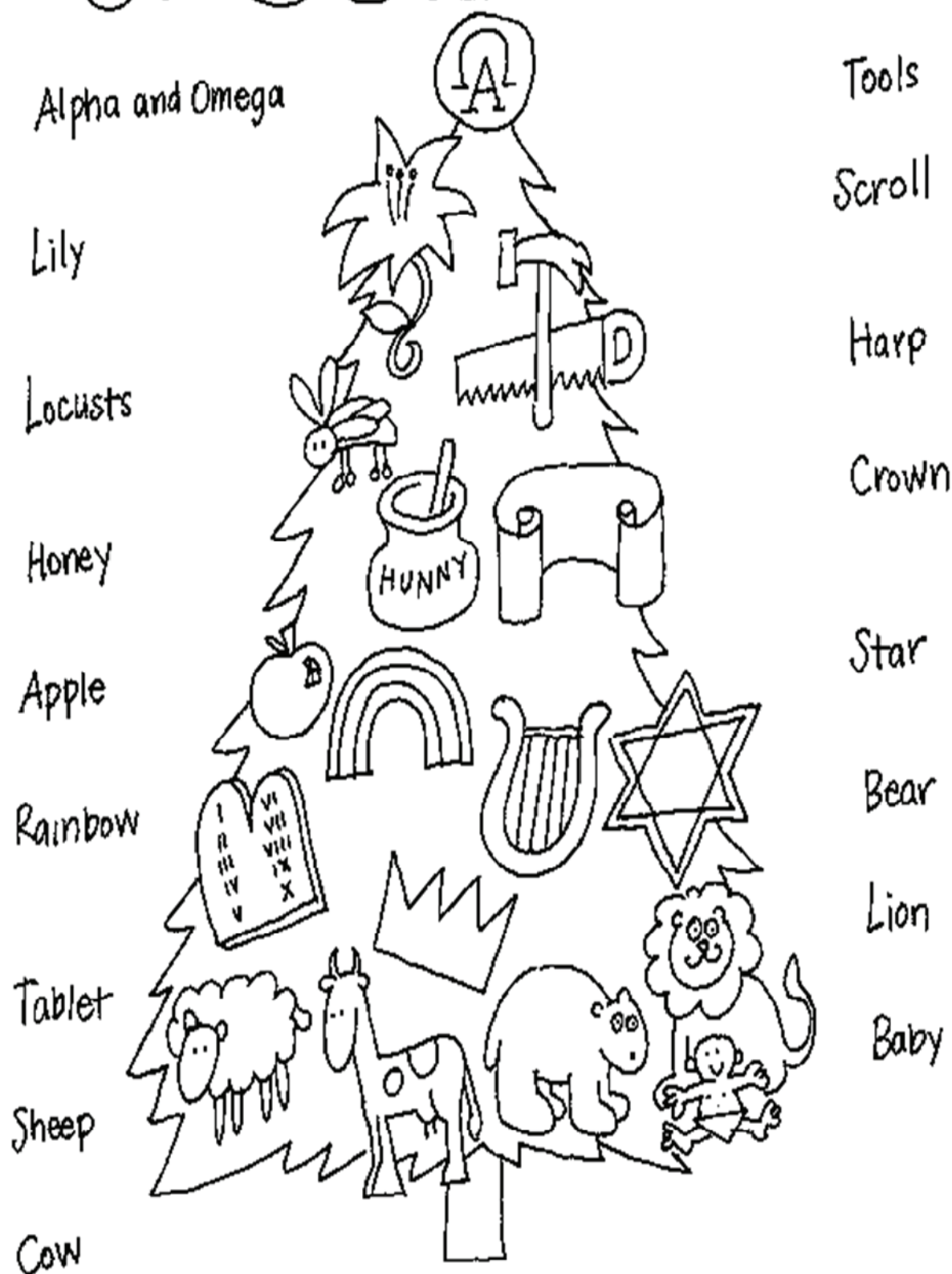


MAKE YOUR OWN JESSE TREE

It's fun to make your own Jesse Tree, either at home or in school. Just use a dead branch, or draw and cut out a branch on cardboard. You can use the symbols above and even add more! You can download these symbols from <http://images.rca.org/docs/discipleship/jessepatterns.pdf>.

Cut them out and colour them in, and then attach a string or coloured ribbon to hang them from the branch.

JESSE TREE





This year we are using the Bee to guide us through Advent. You can find out why by reading this page

THE WORLD OF BEES

Since ancient times, people have had an enormous respect for the little bee – especially in ancient Greece, India and China. The bee has been a symbol of hope, social organisation, hard-work, and eloquence as in the case of St Ambrose. You can read more about St Ambrose on page 20. The bee was also a symbol of the origin of life, as it is central to the pollination of plants and flowers. The products of the bee were considered very valuable – honey was one of the first sources of something sweet for human beings and it was also used as medicine.

Beeswax was important for making candles. In the histories of monasteries, the cultivation of three products was of utmost importance – wax, wheat and grapes. Candles were for use in the Church. Wheat was used to make bread and grapes to make wine to celebrate the Eucharist.

The Chaldean (modern day Iraq) word for a bee is Dabar. It also means 'Word' and so the bee became a symbol of the Word of God, who is Jesus. At the beginning of the Gospel according to St John, he says, "*The Word became Flesh, and lived among us.*" This is a reference to Jesus coming and living among us – which is what is at the heart of our celebration of Christmas.

PRAYER SERVICE FOR THE BEGINNING OF ADVENT



INTRODUCTION: We gather together today to begin our school/class celebration for the season of Advent. During this special time, we prepare our minds and our hearts for Christmas. We all know that the baby Jesus was born long ago in Bethlehem. We must also remember that Jesus wants to come to live in our hearts and in our world every day. We use this special time of Advent to get ready to welcome Jesus.

OPENING SONG: *Waiting (Alive-O, p.101) or The Advent Hymn (Alive-O 5, p.114)*
During the opening song, symbols including the following could be brought to the sacred space: a candle, a Bible, a symbol for the Jesse Tree, an Advent calendar, a picture of the Holy Family.

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

LEADER: Let us listen to a reading from the Gospel according to St Luke. In it, John the Baptist tells the people what they should do to get ready to welcome Jesus.

READER: Everyone thought John was going to be the Great King, and they all began to get excited. But John said: 'I am not the Great King that God promised to send. Someone else is coming after me, and he is much more important than I am. In fact, he is so great that I am not even good enough to untie his shoe laces.' Lots of people came to John the Baptist and said: 'What have we got to do to get ready?' John said: 'Share things with each other, and don't be greedy.' c.f. Luke 3:15-16

LEADER: Let us ask Jesus, our friend, to come into our lives during this Advent season.

READER: The response is: *Lord Jesus, come into our lives.*

When we are busy with many activities... (R)

When we are worried about our friends and family... (R)

When we forget to pray to you... (R)

When the world needs peace... (R)

When our hearts are sad ... (R)

When we fail to do good for others... (R)

When we are unkind in our words or actions... (R)



LEADER: Jesus, friend of children, help us to prepare for your coming by thinking of others and by living the way you taught us. Come into our lives during this special season of Advent so that we can bring your love to the world.

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

CLOSING SONG: *Carol of the Journey (Alive-O, p.108) or Come and Be Born in Our Hearts (Alive-O 7, p.287)*

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MATTHEW 24:26-44



This year, all of the Gospels for the season of Advent come from the Gospel according to Matthew. In this week's Gospel, Jesus tells us that he will come again, at the end of time. However, no one knows when this will be except God. So, Jesus tells us that we must always be ready for him. He gives us this example:



If the owner of the  had known at what
 of the  the  was coming,
 He would have kept  and would **X**
 have let his  be broken into.

What can you do to show that you are ready for Jesus this Christmas time? Use letters from the words **"Be Ready"** to help you to choose one thing you can do each day for this first week of Advent.



e.g. Take caRe of my dog by taking her for a walk every day.

B _____
 E _____
 R _____
 E _____
 A _____
 D _____
 Y _____

SACRED SPACE FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

For the season of Advent, use a purple cloth or purple piece of sugar paper as the base for your Sacred Space. Display the Advent calendar on page 4 behind the Sacred Space, and colour in the star as you do each day's activity. The class Bible can be opened on the Gospel passage for this week. As Tuesday is the Feast of St Andrew, place the picture from page 15 in the Sacred Space this week.



FEAST OF ST ANDREW

NOVEMBER 30TH

During the first week of Advent we celebrate the Feast of St Andrew.

ST ANDREW'S FACT FILE

- St Andrew was born around the same time as Jesus
- He was born in Bethsaida, a town close to the Sea of Galilee
- St Andrew's brother was St Peter
- They were both fishermen
- They were both called by Jesus to be his apostles
- We believe that St Andrew died in Patras, a city in Greece
- St Andrew was crucified, just like Jesus
- We celebrate St Andrew's Feast Day on November 30th
- St Andrew is the patron saint of fishermen
- He is also the patron saint of Scotland



To learn how St Andrew became the patron saint of Scotland, go to www.kandle.ie/2010/09/29/st_andrew/or look up "The Story of St Andrew - Scotland's patron saint" on youtube.com.

Help Jesus find his way to Andrew through the maze



Four of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. Can you find their names in the Word Search below?

P	E	T	E	R	Q	J
W	R	E	T	R	Y	O
J	A	D	S	F	D	H
A	H	K	J	L	Z	N
M	A	N	D	R	E	W
E	X	V	C	B	V	N
S	U	T	E	K	J	M

Colour the picture of St Andrew on the next page, and sing the song *Peter Remembers* from *Alive-O₄* pp302-303 and *Alive-O₅* pp322-323. There is also a Prayer Service in honour of St Andrew in *Alive-O₅*, pp396-397.

PEADAR AGUS AINDRIÚ



D'iarr Íosa ar Aindriú is mé féin an lá sin i nGalilee,
Bheith ag iascaireacht dó go deo, ach ní iascaireacht mar a bhí.

Nuair a dúirt sé 'A Pheadair! Is tú 'bhéas mar aspal agam féin.
Fág do bhád is líon agus tar is lean mé.'

Sé dúirt sé 'A Pheadair! Is tú 'bhéas mar aspal agam féin.
Déan dearmad den iasc! Fág do bhád is lean mé.'

(Beo go Deo 4, p.304)

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MATTHEW 3:1-12



In this week's Gospel, we hear about John the Baptist, who wanted to help the people to prepare for Jesus' coming. He told them that they should be baptised. Read the Gospel passage in Matthew, Chapter 3, Verses 1-12. Then, unscramble the words below to read what John said.

I	tibpeas	ouy	twih	ewrta	os	ttha

oyu	lwli	eigv	pu	rouy	isns

Advent is a special time for us to say sorry to God for our sins. Answer True or False to the following questions to reveal the special way that we say sorry for our sins.

- John the Baptist started preaching in the town
If this is true, put A in box number one below; If it's false, put P in the box
- The prophet Isaiah talked about John
If this is true, put E in box number two below; If it's false, put B in the box
- John's clothes were made of horse's hair
If this is true, put O in box number three below; If it's false, put N in the box
- John had a plastic strap around his waist
If this is true, put S in box number four below; If it's false, put A in the box
- John ate grasshoppers and wild honey
If this is true, put N in box number five below; If it's false, put J in the box
- John baptised the people in the River Liffey
If this is true, put R in box number six below; If it's false, put C in the box
- Many Pharisees and Sadducees also came to be baptised.
If this is true, put E in box number one below; If it's false, put N in the box



Which sacrament do we celebrate to show that we are sorry for our sins?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SACRED SPACE FOR THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

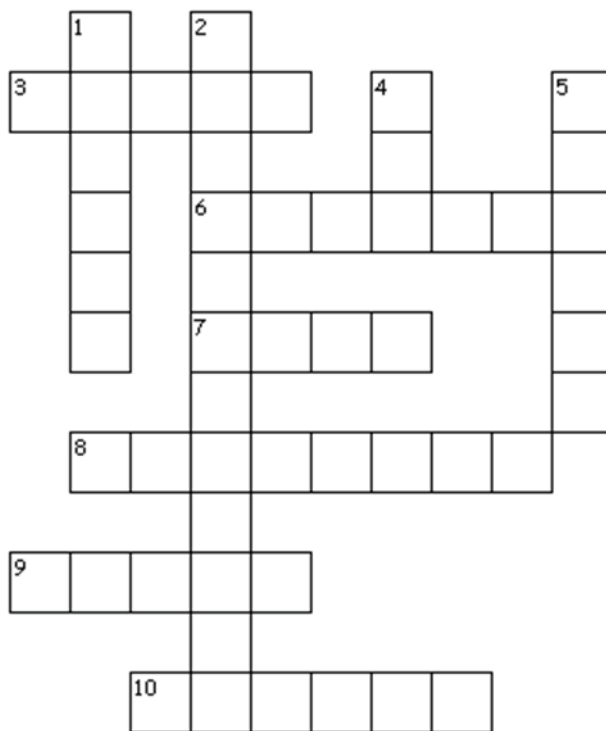
Open the class Bible on the Gospel passage for this week. Place some holy water in the Sacred Space and use it during prayer time to remember your Baptism. On Tuesday, place some honey in the Sacred Space in honour of St Ambrose. As Wednesday is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, add a statue or picture of Mary to the Sacred Space. Continue to colour in the stars on the Advent calendar.



JOHN THE BAPTIST

PREPARES THE WAY FOR JESUS - MATTHEW 3

God had a special job for John the Baptist. He was to help the people get ready so that they could accept Jesus as God's son. Before they could do this, they needed to be sorry for all the wrong things they has done. The prophet Isaiah talked about John a long time before John was born. You can read what he said in Isaiah, Chapter 40, verse 3.



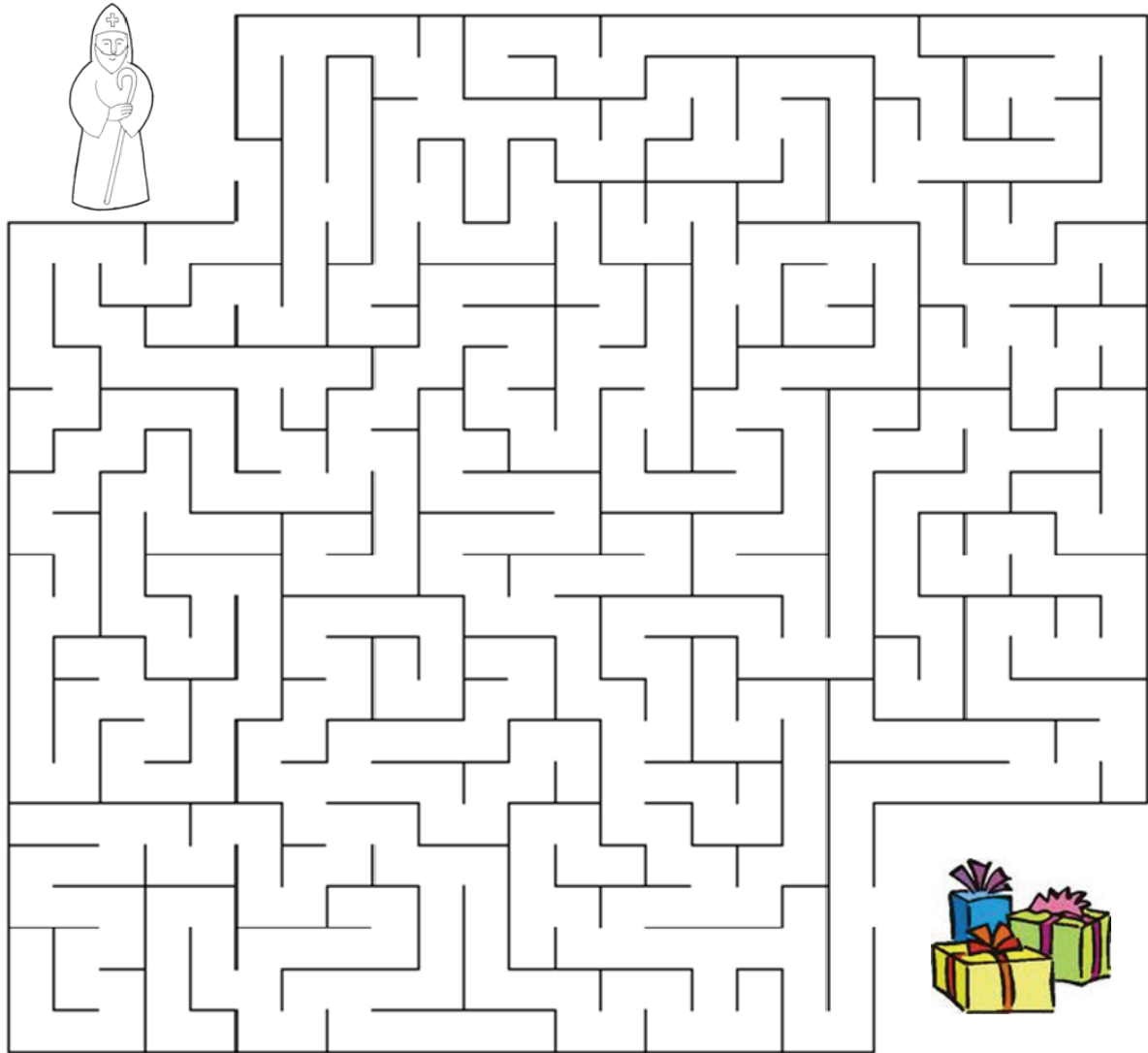
Across

3. The people told John that they were _____ for their sins
6. John thought that he wasn't good enough to carry these
7. We are baptised with _____ water
8. John did this when people came to him
9. John wore clothes made from this animal's hair
10. This prophet wrote about John

Down

1. People were baptised in this river
2. What John ate
4. John asked people to turn back to _____
5. John preached in this place

Help St Nicholas find his lost presents



About St Nicholas

- St Nicholas was born in the third century in Patara, Turkey
- His parents died when he was very young and he inherited a lot of money which he gave away to the needy and the sick
- He dedicated his life to serving God and even went to prison for his faith
- He was made bishop of Myra while still a young man
- His feast day is December 6
- December 6 is still a very important gift-giving day in most of Europe.
- The true story of Santa Claus begins with St Nicholas

You can learn more about St Nicholas at www.stnicholascentre.org

Colour the picture of St Nicholas



Fill in the blanks to finish the sentences.
The words in the box will help.

- 1: St Nicholas has _ _ _ _ in his sack.
- 2: St Nicholas has a _ _ _ _ _ on his hat.
- 3: St Nicholas has a _ _ _ _ _ beard.
- 4: St Nicholas brings _ _ _ _ _ _ _ to boys and girls.

cross

white

presents

toys

ST AMBROSE

DECEMBER 7TH

December 7th is the feast day of St Ambrose of Milan. When he was a baby, legend says that a bee landed on his mouth and left a drop of honey. His father took this as a good sign, that he would be someone who would speak well and that people would want to listen to what he had to say. It is also a play on his name, as in the ancient world, ambrosia was associated with nectar. He is often referred to as the '*Honey-Tongued Doctor*' and often pictures of the saint have a bee or beehive in it.



He was born in France in 340 and after the death of his father was sent to Rome, which was the centre of the Empire. He became a lawyer and later a governor of the province of Liguria and Emilia, the capital of which was Milan. During a dispute over the election of a new bishop in Milan in 374, he was called to keep the peace, and a voice was heard saying, 'Ambrose, bishop'. He was elected then and there and remained a bishop for twenty-three years. He was known for his holiness and for the fact that his door was always open to whomever wanted to see him, rich or poor. True to his father's prediction, he did become famous as a preacher and people came from everywhere to hear his sermons. He is known as a Doctor of the Church. The word *doctor* here comes from the Latin for a teacher. Often St Ambrose is carved into the pulpit in a church or cathedral along with three other 'Doctors' (*St Augustine of Hippo, St John Chrysostom, and St Athanasius*). As well as being patron of bees and bee-keepers, he is also patron of the city of Milan in Italy and patron of students and candle makers.

In Ireland we also have another patron of bees and bee-keepers – *St Gobnait*. She is venerated, in particular, in Ballyvourney, in West Cork. Her story is told in *Alive-O4*, Term 3, Lesson 10.

For You to Do!

Unjumble the words to find places associated with Ambrose

rncafe limna orem ilmeai iglrui

Can you find them on a map of Italy?

Word Search

C	O	J	K	B	Q	W	D	S	X	C	V	B	N	K
J	H	X	G	F	W	S	A	I	N	T	B	N	C	Z
Z	X	U	Z	E	H	G	T	A	Y	U	N	T	H	K
U	I	Z	R	G	B	W	H	H	Q	K	Z	K	T	I
B	X	U	Y	C	E	G	A	W	E	R	T	Y	Y	U
H	C	K	T	R	H	D	N	H	X	I	B	X	S	Z
J	V	B	H	B	P	K	A	P	D	O	C	T	O	R
D	Z	A	M	B	R	O	S	E	E	I	Z	P	S	O
Z	H	X	Z	B	L	K	I	E	W	J	H	G	T	F
T	I	R	W	K	Q	E	U	W	Q	M	A	S	O	D
B	P	Y	U	P	O	I	S	K	U	I	B	Y	M	T
J	P	H	G	F	B	D	S	A	Q	L	W	K	E	R
J	O	H	N	K	L	L	M	N	B	A	V	C	B	X
F	K	D	A	U	G	U	S	T	I	N	E	S	A	Z
G	H	J	K	L	P	O	I	U	Y	T	R	E	W	Q

Ambrose

John

Saint

Milan

Chrysostom

Church

Augustine

Athanasius

Hippo

Doctor



FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION DECEMBER 8TH

Today we celebrate and remember Mary, who became the Mother of God. On this day, we remember that Mary was filled with grace from the very first moment of her life and that from that very first moment God knew that she would become the mother of his Son. Nine months from today, on September 8th, we will celebrate Mary's birthday. We are asked to go to Mass on this special Feast. It is a Holy Day of Obligation.

Did you know that Mary's mother and father were called Anne and Joachim? They are now St Anne and St Joachim and we celebrate their Feast Day on July 26th. Anne is the patron saint of mothers and Joachim is the patron saint of fathers. Anne and Joachim were also Jesus' grandparents.

Write a prayer for your grandparents today.



Mary has many names or titles. See how many you can find in this Word Search

HELP OF CHRISTIANS
HOLY MARY
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
MARY MOTHER OF GOD
MORNING STAR
MOTHER OF CHRIST
MOTHER OF THE CHURCH
MYSTICAL ROSE
QUEEN OF ANGELS
QUEEN OF PEACE



Q	T	H	I	M	O	T	H	E	R	O	F	C	H	R	I	S	T	A	S
U	V	L	M	W	M	X	W	V	F	D	N	L	A	E	F	M	C	E	N
E	Q	H	M	L	G	A	K	R	L	E	A	W	X	X	Y	V	Y	N	A
E	V	W	A	Y	O	W	R	D	K	H	N	N	V	S	O	L	T	J	I
N	L	M	C	U	R	Z	R	T	J	G	D	V	T	X	U	L	I	K	T
O	F	L	U	Y	C	A	Y	H	L	Q	Q	I	S	C	E	O	H	D	S
F	K	L	L	O	H	V	M	Y	U	P	C	D	Q	F	X	O	O	S	I
P	C	C	A	Q	Q	S	R	Y	C	A	A	V	C	S	N	G	L	A	R
E	W	R	T	C	S	U	C	J	L	K	D	D	N	L	F	V	Z	L	H
A	I	D	E	C	F	E	E	R	V	O	U	C	W	O	U	Y	T	S	C
C	B	A	C	D	V	B	O	E	F	B	H	Z	R	G	X	P	U	R	F
E	I	H	O	X	E	S	S	Z	N	Q	N	E	E	M	X	Z	K	Y	O
A	D	J	N	Z	E	K	V	D	Q	O	H	W	J	C	Y	L	G	P	P
K	T	H	C	R	U	H	C	E	H	T	F	O	R	E	H	T	O	M	L
S	J	X	E	Z	W	R	A	S	O	W	M	A	F	N	P	X	M	J	E
G	V	L	P	P	K	Y	H	M	S	L	Z	E	N	F	T	C	A	M	H
T	O	F	T	K	X	U	Y	V	R	T	N	D	T	G	S	D	A	A	Q
Q	Z	W	I	X	J	R	J	O	U	G	N	V	T	H	E	T	C	J	J
X	T	I	O	R	A	T	S	G	N	I	N	R	O	M	Z	L	S	R	S
P	C	G	N	M	I	B	U	D	V	H	I	Y	I	H	C	O	S	Y	H

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MATTHEW 11:2-11



In this week's Gospel, John the Baptist asks Jesus if he is the One that God sent to save the people, or if they should wait for another prophet. To answer John's question, Jesus named all the signs that he had given. **Read this week's Gospel passage in your class Bible. Then use the code below to reveal Jesus' six signs:**

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	k	L	m	n	o	p	r	s	t	u	v	W	y
□	♦	☹	◆	⊞	↓	□	⇒	↵	☺	≡	♠	☺	●	⌘	℞	✦	☞	■	○	✈	⚙

☞	⇒	⊞	♦	≡	↵	☺	◆	☹	□	☺	✦	⊞	⊞													
☞	⇒	⊞	≡	□	♠	⊞	✈	□	≡	☹																
☞	⇒	●	✦	⊞	✈	⇒	●	⇒	□	○	⊞	≡	⊞	⌘	℞	●	✦	⚙	□	℞	⊞	☹	■	℞	⊞	◆
☞	⇒	⊞	◆	⊞	□	↓	⇒	⊞	□	℞																
☞	⇒	⊞	◆	⊞	□	◆	□	℞	⊞	℞	☹	✦	⊞	◆												
□	●	◆	☺	⊞	✈	✦	⇒	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	☹	

Jesus is still helping people today. Although he is not here himself, he works through people to bring his Good News to the world. Can you name some people who help to show God's love in the world today? Can you make a list of all the ways that we can see Good News in our world?

SACRED SPACE FOR THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Open the class Bible on the Gospel passage for this week. Continue to colour in the stars on the Advent calendar. This week we can light the pink/rose candle on the Advent wreath during prayer time. Place the picture of St Lucy from page 25 around the sacred space this week.



FEAST OF ST LUCY

DECEMBER 13TH

The name “Lucy” means light. Candles are lit to celebrate her feast day. This reminds us that even though the days around this time of year are short and dark, brighter, longer days are coming. Some of the nicest St Lucy Day traditions are Swedish! In Sweden, this special feast is called *Luciadagen* and it marks the beginning of Christmas for Swedish families. Before dawn on December 13th the oldest daughter in the family will dress as St Lucy, wearing a white gown, a red sash and a crown made of green leaves and nine candles. Her little brothers will also dress up as ‘*starboys*’. They wear white gowns, cone-shaped hats decorated with gold stars, carry star-tipped wands and follow their sister round the house. She then wakes her family and brings them special St Lucy Day treats such as buns called *Lussekatter* (St Lucy's Cats).

Read about How St Lucy is celebrated in other Parts of the World

Croatia: In Croatia people plant the Christmas wheat on the feast of St Lucy. Plant the seeds into a small dish of soil, and place the dish in a moderately warm room, keeping it watered. By Christmas Eve, the fresh shoots of wheat should be about 8 inches of a soft green. The wheat then can be placed next to the crib as a gift to Jesus. It also reminds us of the Bread of Life.



Italy: In Italy St Lucy is called Santa Lucia and she is celebrated in many parts of Italy, especially in Sicily, Naples, Lombardy and the Veneto. In Verona there is a big Christmas market and presents are exchanged. In Sicily, wheat food such as pasta and bread are not eaten but instead they eat *cuccia* made from boiled wheat berries, ricotta and sugar.

You might like to learn the words of a song dedicated to St Lucy

Santa Lucia, thy light is glowing
Through darkest winter night, Comfort bestowing.
Dreams float on dreams tonight,
Comes then the morning light,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia.

You can listen to this song and watch the video on www.kandle.ie

It is also available on YouTube at the following address:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mk0FyZqNp5Q>

NAOMH LUCY AGUS A BUACHAILL RÉALTA:
DATHAIGH AN PICTIÚR



ADVENT RECONCILIATION SERVICE



This prayer service might be used in assembly for the whole school or in the classroom before the children are taken to individual confession.

OPENING SONG: *I'm Sorry, God* (Alive-O4 p263)

INTRODUCTION:

Advent is a very special time. It is the start of a new year for the Church. It is a time of waiting, a time of getting ready; it is a time for us to think about how we are living our lives. Sometimes, Advent can be a very busy time. We rush around looking for presents, putting up decorations and trying to get everything done before Christmas arrives. But, today, we are going to remember that Advent is also a time to pray, a time to remember what Christmas is really about and a time to make peace with ourselves, with each other and with God.

OPENING PRAYER:

God our Father, we thank you for this Advent time so that we can prepare for the coming of your Son, Jesus. We gather today knowing that you always love us and you always forgive us even when we forget to be the best that we can be. Give us a new heart this Advent so that we can love you and each other more each day.

Amen

READING: *Romans 13:11-13a*

You know what sort of times we live in, and so you should live properly. It is time to wake up. You know that the day when we will be saved is nearer now than when we first put our faith in the Lord. Night is almost over, and day will soon appear. We must stop behaving as people do in the dark and be ready to live in the light.

The Word of the Lord.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE:

LEADER: Now we take some time to be still and quiet. Let us think about the times that we may not have been the best that we can be, the times when we thought only about ourselves....

- Do I take time each day for God; to pray or even just to say hello?
- Do I treat others with respect and as I would like them to treat me?
- Do I always tell the truth?

- Do I use bad language?
- Am I jealous of things that others have?
- Am I lazy and are there times when I don't do my very best?
- Do I love my family and do I try to make home a happy, peaceful place?
- Do I care for my environment and do I try not to be wasteful?
- Do I take care of my body and try to get enough sleep and exercise and to eat well?

LEADER: We say sorry for all the times that we have not been the best that we can possibly be as we say the Confiteor and Act of Sorrow together:

The Confiteor:

I confess to almighty God...

Act of Sorrow:

Oh my God I thank you for loving me...

TOGETHER WE SING: *I'm sorry* (Junior Classes Alive-O₄ p282))
Whatsoever you do (Senior Classes Alive-O₅ p209)

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of forgiveness. May we always find the strength to forgive those who have hurt us. Grant us the wisdom to see you in everyone we meet each day. Make us people of peace, love, joy and hope. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

CLOSING HYMN: *Advent Hymn* (Alive-0₅, p.114)



ST FRANCIS AND THE CRIB

More than seven hundred years ago St Francis of Assisi decided that he would tell the Christmas story in a way that it had never been told before. Most people could not read and so he set up a stable scene in a cave not far from his home in Assisi. He used real people and animals to help him tell the story and people came from far and near to see what he was doing. As they gathered around him he told them how Jesus had been born in a stable because there was no room anywhere else in the town. He also told them how angels appeared to the shepherds with the Good news of Jesus' birth. St Francis' idea was such a good one that it quickly became an important part of Christmas celebrations all over the world. Nowadays, most of us have cribs in our homes at Christmastime but, we don't usually use real people and animals.



www.whychristmas.com has an online nativity scene to build

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MATTHEW 1:18-25



Use the key below to help you to tell the story from this week's Gospel.



Mary



Joseph



Baby



Angel

A young woman named  was engaged to  from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a  by God's Holy Spirit.  was a good man and did not want to embarrass  in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call  off the wedding. While  was thinking about this, an  from the Lord came to him in a dream. The  said, "  , the  that  will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. Then after her  is born, name him Jesus."

Joseph did what the angel had told him, and he and Mary were married.



What words would you use to describe the way Joseph acted?

SACRED SPACE FOR THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

Open the class Bible on the Gospel passage for this week. Continue to colour in the stars on the Advent calendar. Light the last purple/violet candle on the Advent wreath during prayer time this week. Place a picture or statue of St Joseph in the Sacred Space this week and pray for the courage to do what God wants you to do.



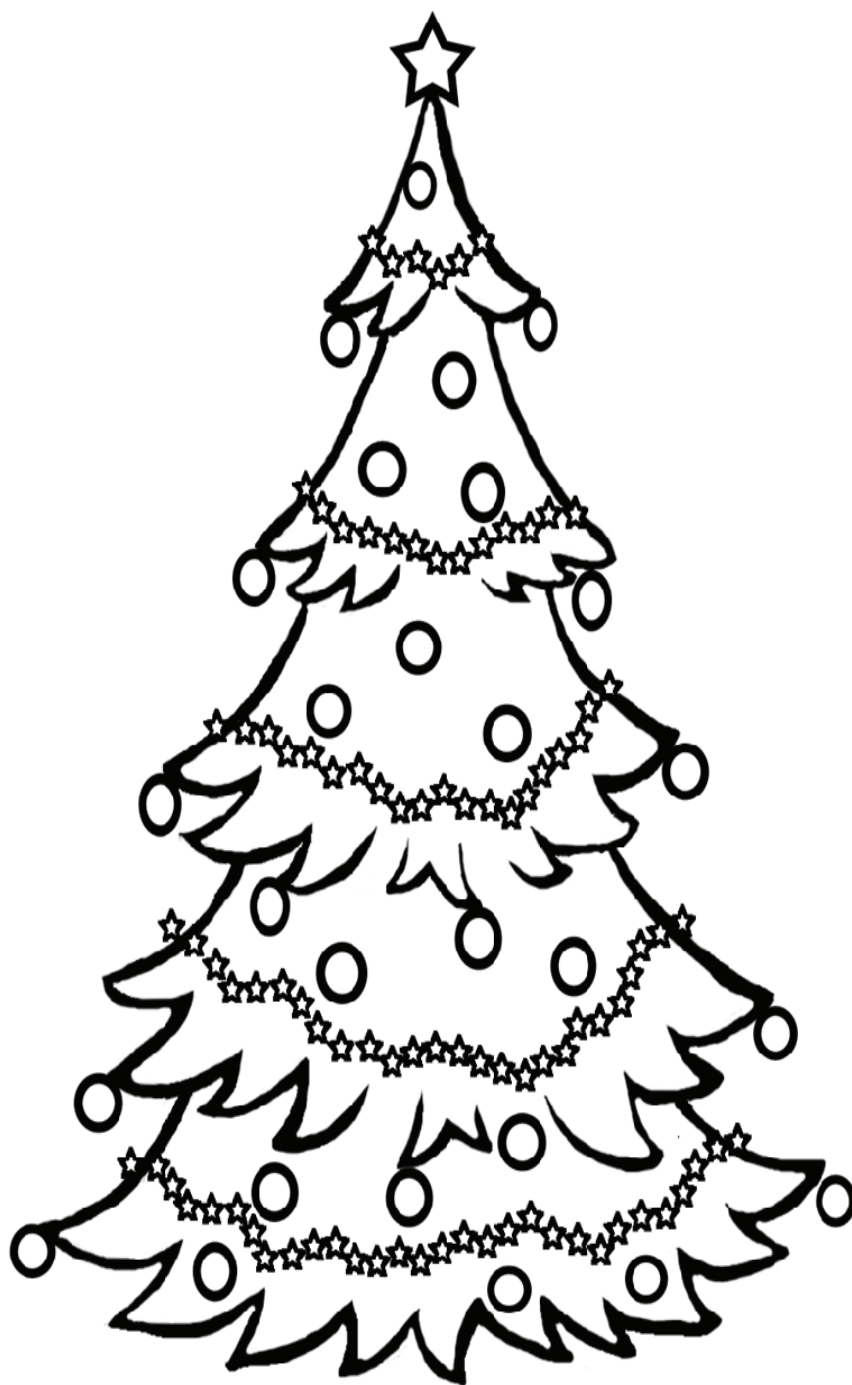
Colour the Christmas Tree

BLESSING PRAYER FOR A CHRISTMAS TREE

Loving God,
we give thanks for
your gift of light, the
sun, the moon, and
the stars of the night.
We give thanks for
Jesus Christ, your
Son: the light of the
world.

He is Emmanuel,
God-with-us, the
Prince of Peace, who
fills us with the
wonder of your love.
Let your blessing
come upon us as we
light this tree. May
the light and cheer it
gives be a sign of the
joy that fills our
hearts. May we
know that your
blessings on us are
many more than the
lights on this tree.
We ask this through
Christ our Lord.

Amen



Draw presents under the tree



ADVENT QUIZ



1. How many weeks are there in Advent?
2. What colour vestments does the priest wear during Advent?
3. What is the church year called?
4. This year in Advent we begin hearing the Gospel of St Matthew. Who wrote the other gospels?
5. What kind of leaves are used in the Advent Wreath?
6. Who was Jesse?
7. Name three symbols that we place on the Jesse Tree during Advent.
8. Who is the Patron Saint of Scotland?
9. Name a prophet in the bible.
10. Who was sent to help people to get ready to accept Jesus as God's son?
11. Where was St Nicholas born?
12. What date is his feast day celebrated?
13. Which Saint is known as The Doctor of the Church?
14. Who is the Irish patron saint of bees and bee keepers?
15. Who told Mary that she was going to have a baby?
16. Name Mary's parents.
17. What is a Holy Day of Obligation?
18. St Francis gave us which Christmas tradition?
19. What colour candle do we light during the fourth week of Advent?
20. Who wrote 'A Christmas Carol'?



CARTAÍ NOLLAG



Lean siad an réalt

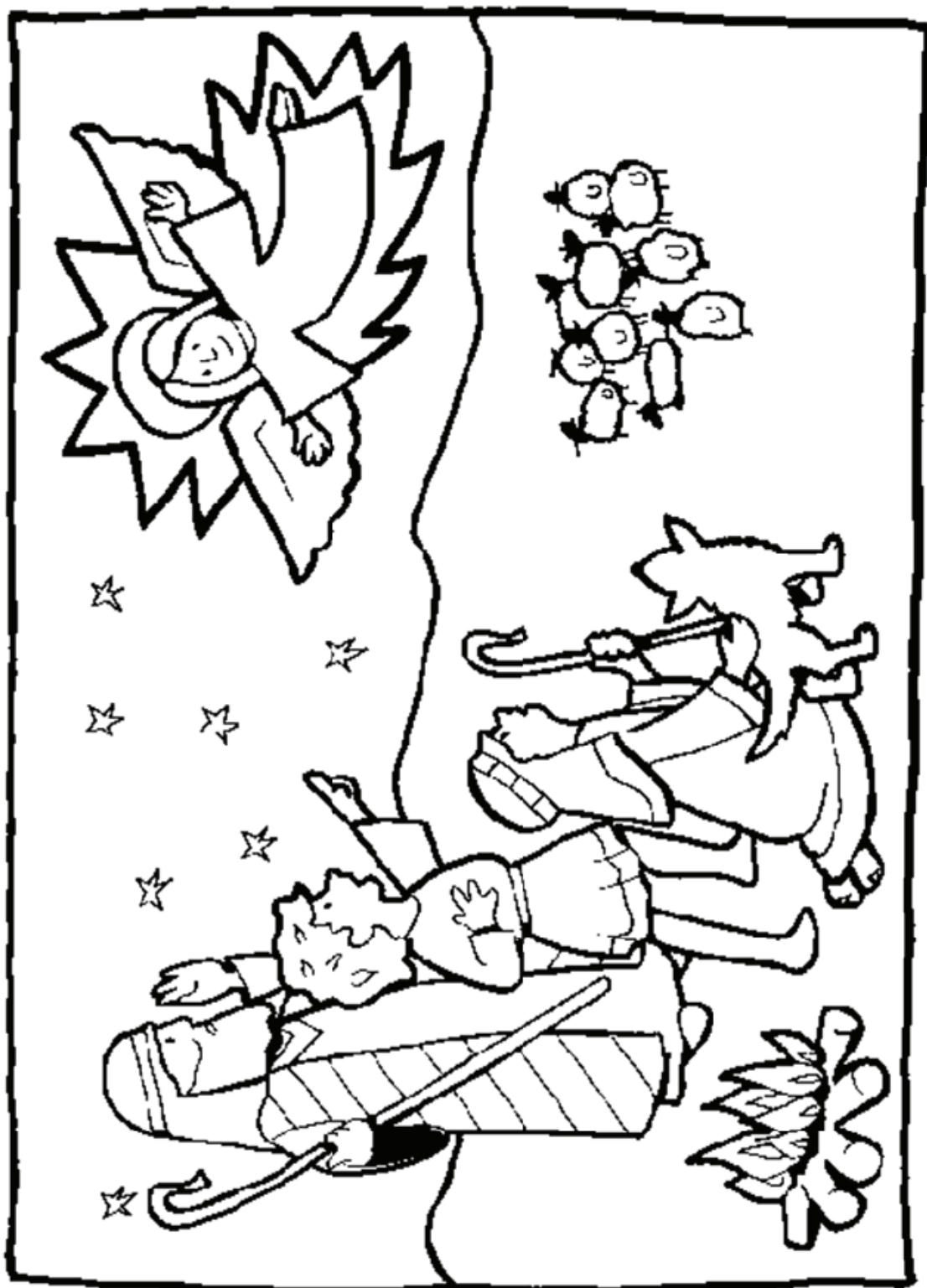


Glóir do Dhia sna hairde

FRAME IT!

Colour this picture and cut it out. Then paste it to a sheet of coloured card to make a photo frame!

You can put a hole at the top and attach a string to hang it from a nail or a hook.



Two Poems for Teachers....

THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

*For each of us there are the Christmas ghosts
who gather in the shadows by the door,
the living ghosts, the gentle dead
whose hearts now beat once more.*

*We meet them only at this time of year,
their warm, lost smiles come shining once again,
they step out from our memory
like rainbows in the rain.*

*I see you in your winter clothes, laughing.
Eyes that I loved are full again with joy.
You open wide your aching arms
that I may step inside.*

*A scent that was the scent of life returns,
darkness dissolves, old songs drift in the night air,
a dream becomes a tender touch,
frost lights your ghostly hair.*

*And, if I listen, I can hear your words
and say the things I never chanced to say.
Belief becomes an absolute,
for this short, winter day.*

John MacKenna

BC: AD

*This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.*

*This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.*

*This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.*

*And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect.
Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.*

U.A. Fanthorpe

(available in U.A. Fanthorpe,

New & Collected Poems: Enitharmon Press, 2010)

We are grateful to John MacKenna and to Enitharmon Press www.enitharmon.co.uk

for permission to use these poems.

CHRISTMAS IN LITERATURE

Many Christmas based stories have been made into movies and, over the holidays, there are lots of these movies on the television and in the cinema. But, sometimes, it's nicer to read some of those stories. Often, the pictures that we create in our heads, as we read these stories, are better than the ones on television!



One of the stories most associated with Christmas is Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. It tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge is a miser, who, during the night of Christmas Eve, is visited by three ghosts (Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future) who help him to mend his ways. The ghosts show him how things were in the past, in happier days; show him the life of his employee, Bob Cratchit, and his family as they prepare for Christmas dinner; and, finally, Scrooge sees the future and how, when he dies, no one will mourn his passing. As he looks into the house of Bob Cratchit, he is struck by the joy and happiness of this poor family – their happiness has no bearing on the fact that they are poor. He wakes up on Christmas morning a changed man. He becomes generous and happy again and, as it says at the end of the book, *“And it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!”*

The Welsh writer, Dylan Thomas, wrote a beautiful memoir of his Christmases growing up and how the memories of all those Christmases are joined together, *“One Christmas was so much like another, in those years around the sea-town corner now.... that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six”*.

The American writer, Louisa May Alcott, wrote about Christmas in *Little Women*, which tells the story of Jo, her mother and her sisters during the American Civil War. On Christmas morning, Jo finds a small book, a modest gift from her mother for Christmas. She tells of the joy she feels in the love that is shown by the gift. She calls it, *“that beautiful old story of the best life ever lived”* – it is a copy of the New Testament. As her sisters wake, they find similar gifts under each of their pillows. Even in times of shortages and poverty, the smallest of gifts can mean so much to the person that receives them.

OTHER BOOKS TO BE READ AT CHRISTMAS ARE:

The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin, 1985)

*Fast becoming a classic Christmas favourite and celebrating its 215th anniversary. It tells the story of the train which takes a group of children to the North Pole to see Santa Claus, reminiscent of the other favourite from Christmas, ***The Snowman*** by Raymond Briggs.*

The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey by Susan Wojciechowski (Walker Books, 1995) *A beautifully illustrated book, on the creation of a crib*

The Christmas Mystery by Jostein Gaarder (Phoenix 1996)

A story told in the days of Advent. Each chapter marks the days leading up till Christmas. It might be suitable for the senior classes – to be read individually or as part of an Advent reflection every day.

One Little Angel by Ruth Brown (Andersen Press, 1998)

Again, this is a beautifully illustrated book, suitable for the younger classes and with a delightful twist at the end.

Amazing Peace – A Christmas Poem by Maya Angelou (Schwartz & Wade, 2005)

This is a poem, written for the 2005 White House tree-lighting ceremony, by the unofficial American poet laureate, Maya Angelou.

12 Days of Christmas by Kathleen Darragh (Veritas 2006)

This is a different take on the traditional 12 days of Christmas story, and it is beautifully illustrated by Jeanette Dunne, who illustrated the Alive-O programme.

Two great books, suitable for reading in class or for older children are the two volumes of ***Irish Christmas Stories*** edited by David Marcus and published in 1995 and 1997 by Bloomsbury.

These next books have wonderful stories and poems set at Christmas from all different sources and suitable for all ages:

The Oxford Book of Christmas Poems (Oxford, 1983)

The Oxford Book of Christmas Stories (Oxford, 1986)

The Macmillan Book of Christmas (Ted Smart, 1995)

The Faber Book of Christmas (Faber, 1996)

Joy to the World – Two Thousand Years of Christmas (Four Courts Press, 2000)

Fill My Stocking – A Christmas Anthology (Alan Titchmarsh BBC Books, 2005).

The county library system should be able to find some or all of these books.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

JANUARY 6TH, 2010



On January 6th we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, when the wise men came to worship the baby Jesus. Tradition tells us that their names were Caspar, Melchior and Balthassar. The men were astrologers, and their job was to study the sky and examine the stars. The Gospel tells us that the men were following one particular, bright star in the sky. They knew that this star would lead them to the Messiah, because they read about it in the Book of Micah, which is part of the Bible. The wise men first went to Jerusalem, but then the star led them on to Bethlehem. You can read about *Visitors from the East* in the Gospel of Matthew 2:1-12.

The wise men brought special gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh with them. These gifts were very meaningful. Gold was a very precious and expensive gift, and showed how important Jesus was. Frankincense is a sweet perfume which was often burned in the temple to worship God. It was a sign that Jesus should also be worshipped. Myrrh was used to keep things fresh, and it was used by the women to anoint Jesus' body when he died. By bringing it as a gift to the baby Jesus, the wise men foretold his suffering and death.

HELP THE WISE MEN FIND THEIR WAY TO JESUS BY MAKING CAMELS FOR THEIR JOURNEY!

What you will need:

- One cardboard egg carton between three children
- One cork per child (or half a cork between two)
- Pipe cleaners (six per child, but these can be halved)
- Black marker
- Scissors
- Paint, wool and wiggly eyes are optional!



What to do:

1. Divide the egg carton into three sets of two cups
2. Using the point of a scissors, an adult should make holes at the base of the cups for the four legs and holes at each end for the neck and tail. Make one small hole in the end of the cork.
3. Insert a pipe cleaner into each of the holes for legs and the tail.
4. Insert one end of a pipe cleaner into the cork; insert the other end into a hole at the end of the egg cups.
5. Add eyes, a mouth, and decorate!

If you would like to add the wise men to the camels (similar to those illustrated above), you can download a picture from <http://www.christmascoloring.net/religious>

Help each wise man find his gift for Jesus



Can you name the three Wise Men?

sCarpa

iohlMecr

haBlsarst



Catholic Schools Week 2011

January 30th – February 5th 2011



'Catholic Schools - Rooted in Jesus Christ'

2011 THEME

This year's theme is inspired by the Pastoral Letter of Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, to the Catholics of Ireland. In this letter, the Pope addresses the children and young people of Ireland when he says: "He (Jesus Christ) loves you and he has offered himself on the cross for you." The Pope further encourages them to "seek a personal relationship with him ... because he will never betray your trust. He alone can satisfy your deepest longings and give your lives their fullest meaning ... Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and his goodness, and shelter the flame of faith in your hearts." These words have a special resonance for the education project of the Catholic School. In it the young person is introduced to the love of Christ and is invited to enter a personal relationship in which their trust will never be betrayed. In this way, our Catholic schools are truly rooted in Jesus Christ.



SCHOOL RESOURCES

As in previous years, all schools will be provided with a resource book that will help in planning for and celebrating *Catholic Schools Week 2011*. Copies of this book will also be sent to all priests. The resource will include suggestions for extending the celebration to the parish, home and diocese. **On Wednesday 2nd February**, schools are encouraged to host **Grandparents Day**. This day was a tremendous success all over the country last year. We hope that even more schools will take the opportunity to invite grandparents into the school on this day in an attempt to celebrate, acknowledge and honour the important role that they play in handing on the faith to their grandchildren and the wealth of experience, wisdom and knowledge that they have to share with young people.