

Advent II

This lesson—the second in Advent—continues to prepare children for the Mystery of Christmas. We move toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds, and the Magi. We arrive at the birth of Jesus, when the light of Christ is lit. This week's presentation focuses on the Holy Family. For this lesson you can use the pictures as you retell it, and you might want to use a Nativity set if your family owns one.

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way.

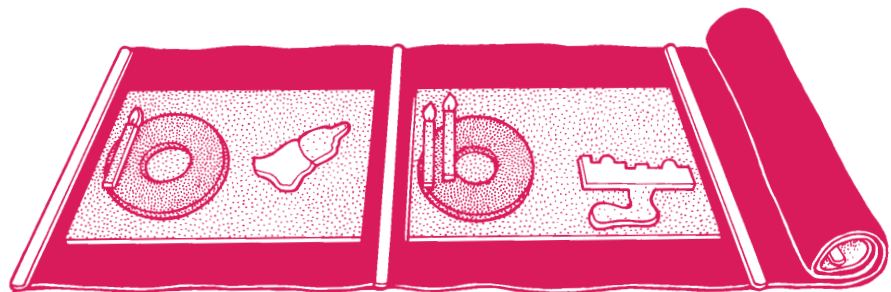
You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. If you retell the presentation, you will need:

- five candles (three purple, one pink and one white, or four blue and one white, depending on your church's custom)
- Nativity figures of Mary, Joseph and the donkey
- *optional:* candle snuffer
- *optional:* You might like to use the home version of the Godly Play Advent materials, called "Mini Advent," available from Godly Play Resources. (To order, call 1-800-445-4390 or visit www.godlyplayresources.com.)

Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

The Presentation



On the first Sunday in Advent we remembered the prophets. Today we remember the Holy Family and we light two candles. The Holy Family is on the way to Bethlehem and we are going with them.

Here is the Mother Mary. (*Gently touch each figure as you name it or bring them to the story.*) Here is the Father Joseph. Here is the donkey.

Mary was about to have a baby. It is very hard to walk when you are about to have a baby. Sometimes she could not take another step. Then she rode on the donkey.

It is also hard to ride on a donkey when you are about to have a baby. When she couldn't ride another step, she got down, and walked. She rode and she walked.

They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night.

Here is the light of the prophets. (*Light the purple candle lit for Advent I.*)

Here is the light of the Mother Mary and the Father Joseph as they make their way to Bethlehem. (*Light a second purple candle.*)

Let's enjoy the light.

Now watch. I am going to change the light. Do you see how the light of the prophets is just in one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place. (*Gently snuff or blow out the prophet candle.*)

Watch. Do you see how the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph is just in this one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place. (*Gently snuff or blow out the Holy Family candle.*)

Do you see how the light is not gone? It is changed. It is not in one place. Now it is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner, to fill up the whole room. The room is filling up with the light of the prophets and with the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph. Anywhere you go in this room you can come close to them today.

Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 2)

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

Research suggests that about 20% of the energy of young mammals in the wild is spent purely in "play," activity that serves no observable purpose. Why would nature favor the use of so much biological energy in the service of seemingly useless activity? Perhaps it is not as "useless" as it seems.

As a culture, we struggle with the purpose and meaning of play. Ancient views of play

related it to power (status, victory), to fate (magic, luck), to community identity (festivals, cooperation), or to frivolity (nonsense as opposed to work). The modern view sees play as involving progress (adaptation, growth), the imaginary (creativity, fantasy), or the concerns of the self (peak experiences, leisure). *Our* view is that play involves all of this. That is why it is so hard to define.

The first thing to acknowledge, then, as we struggle to understand play, is its ambiguity. It is tough to define! Could it be that play, by its very nature, cannot be captured using precise language, but rather through the language of poetry, overflowing with energy and life?