

Advent III

This lesson—the third in Advent—continues to prepare children for the Mystery of Christmas. We continue moving toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds, and the Magi. Finally, we arrive at the birth of Jesus, when the light of Christ is lit. This week's presentation focuses on the shepherds. For this lesson you can use the pictures on this page and/or 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, the donkey, shepherd(s), and sheep.
- *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.godlyplay.com.)

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

The Presentation



On the first Sunday in Advent we remembered the prophets. On the second Sunday we remembered the Holy Family. (Touch the Holy Family or bring them to the story.) On the third Sunday in Advent we remember the shepherds who were standing in the fields around Bethlehem keeping their sheep and we light three candles. They were trying to stay awake so the wolf could not come and get the sheep. Suddenly there was so much light in the sky that it hurt their eyes.

They were afraid. Then they heard singing in the sky! Angels were singing, “Don’t be afraid. We bring you tidings of great joy. Peace on earth and good will to everyone. A child is born. Go. Hurry. Run to Bethlehem to see the child who will change everything.”

Here is the candle of the prophets. (*Light the candle for Advent I.*) Here is the candle of the Holy Family. (*Light the candle for Advent II.*) Here is the candle of the shepherds. (*Light the pink candle.*)

Look—there is something different about this candle. It is the color of roses. This is to remind us of the great joy the angels sang of. It also helps us remember that even if it is very serious to get ready to come close to a great mystery like Christmas, you can’t be serious all of the time. This is the Sunday when it is time for a little celebration.

There is one more thing about the color of roses. It is also one of the colors for the Mother Mary. We remember her again, for without the Mother Mary, there would be no baby.

Let’s enjoy the light.

Now I am going to change the light. Do you see how the light of the prophets is just in one place? Watch. (*Gently snuff or blow out the prophet candle.*)

Now it is changed, and the light that was in just one place is spreading out. It gets more invisible as it spreads out. Soon it will fill up the whole room.

Here is the light of the Holy Family. Now watch; I am going to change the light. (*Gently snuff or blow out the Holy Family candle.*) Look. It is spreading out and filling up the whole room. Just because it is hard to see doesn’t mean that it isn’t there.

And here is the light of the shepherds. I am going to change the light. Do you see how it is in one place? (*Gently snuff or blow out the shepherd candle.*) Look. It is filling up the room with the shepherds and mixing with the Holy Family and the prophets. Anywhere you go in the room today they will all be there.

Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 3)

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.

Perhaps we can clarify what play is by defining its opposite. Our search for the opposite of play will involve language, but also include nonverbal, body-based “knowing.”

Some suggest that “seriousness” is the opposite of play. While seriousness may try

to exclude play, play includes seriousness. Is “work” the opposite of play? For many people, their work *is* play; think of the artist, athlete, or business person who experiences work and play as two parts of a unified rhythm of life rather than opposites.

Godly Play suggests that the opposite of play is *emptiness*. When we are at play, we are full of life, connected to the game and to the players in the game. Energy seems to expand rather than be used up.