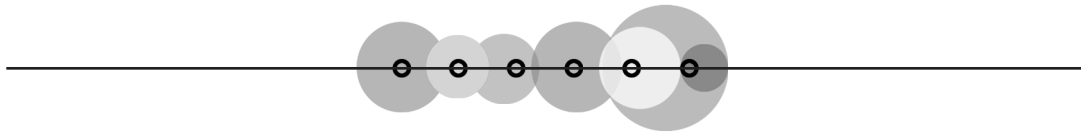


Leader's Guide for

Journey of Faith

for Advent and Christmas



Pray It! Study It! Live It!® resources offer a holistic approach to learning, living, and passing on the Catholic faith.

Journey of Faith series

Journey of Faith for Advent and Christmas:

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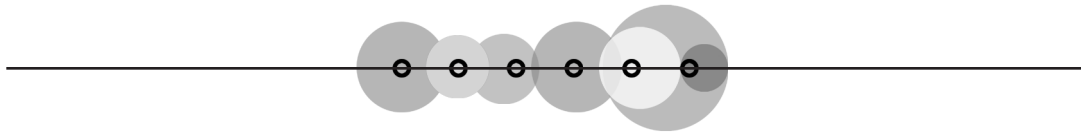
Journey of Faith for Ordinary Time:

Creating a Sense of Belonging Between Young People and the Church

Leader's Guide for

Journey of Faith

for Advent and Christmas



Creating a Sense of Belonging
Between Young People and the Church

Mary Shrader

with Therese Brown and Tony Tamberino



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The publishing team included Barbara A. Murray, development editor; Lorraine Kilmartin, reviewer; Mary Koehler, permissions editor; prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the prepublication and production services departments of Saint Mary's Press.

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Printed in the United States of America

Printing: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year: 2013 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05

ISBN 0-88489-880-6

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Introduction

THE SEASONS OF ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

The Advent and Christmas seasons are times of shopping, baking, traveling, and list making.

What? Did you read that correctly? Yes, you did. The time between Thanksgiving and the new year includes a long list of things to do, people to see, and places to be.

As leaders in ministry, our first instinct might be to halt the shopping, the baking, the busyness, and especially the list making that inevitably consumes December. But our goal as leaders in ministry during this time of year is to point the people of the faith community to the true meaning of the Advent and Christmas seasons. If we think—even for a moment—that we can make the secular in Christmas disappear from the lives of young people and their families, then we might as well conduct sessions and lessons about Advent for ourselves alone. And yet, there is so much to explore during the Advent and Christmas seasons that touches on our faith and can help us approach the season in a way that highlights the holiness in the midst of the hype.

Advent Colors

Liturgical colors are not merely decoration. They are visual aids that point to reasons and rhythms in the liturgical calendar. Whenever possible, use the seasonal colors of Advent. Vibrant purple is at the same time calm and soothing. Advent calls us to wait in the calm, but not effortlessly. We are also called to anticipate the Christmas season with vibrancy and joy. Blue can be used in place of or with purple at Advent. Deep violet blue reminds us of Mary, who plays a significant role during the season. Mary's waiting for Jesus's birth modeled faithfulness, steadfastness, and hope.

Advent Wreath and Light

Light is a strong and steady image in many stories of faith, hope, and new life. Darkness is reserved for loneliness, sin, and despair. And light illuminates our perspective on community, purity, and hope. Homes decorated with Christmas lights are a sure sign that light is both a welcome necessity and an undying Advent and Christmas symbol of a longing for peace. Use an Advent wreath, along with other candles, in each prayer experience during Advent. Remember that even conversation can be a prayerful time. Traditionally, four candles are used in the Advent wreath, with a new one lit for each week of the season. Perhaps your local tradition includes using three purple, or blue, candles and one pink candle. The pink candle is lit the third week of Advent. Local tradition may also include placing one white candle in the center of the wreath, a constant reminder of God's indefinite and ever-constant presence, even while we wait for him during Advent.

Four Weeks

If your parish lights a wreath in the church during Advent, consider suggesting to the liturgical committee a prayerful discerning of four words or phrases to focus on each time an Advent candle is lit. The words would coincide with that week's message from the readings. Possible words are *hope, reason, light, peace, patience, new, simple, joy*. The four words could be woven into activities, prayer services, lessons, and homilies for all ages, thus creating a common thread with every parishioner. Focusing on Advent might be difficult because it competes with a multitude of family and social holiday obligations. Offer families the opportunity to enter into Advent in meaningful and simple ways—just like the season.

Christmas Season

It is easy to say that commercialism is the absolute opposite of the real reason for the season. Shopping at the mall is not mentioned in the Bible, nor is it a foundation of our Christian faith, but giving gifts is. Help the young people and their families understand the concepts of Christmas gift-giving, holiday fervor, and chaotic preparation, and encourage them to seek the core reason behind their actions: to act genuinely and graciously and to ask for God's help in welcoming the spirit of Christmastime. Create opportunities for young people and their families to engage in gift-giving with people they do not even know as a form of service to the community. And remember, Advent and Christmas are not the only times for learning about and acting on issues of injustice, such as homelessness and hunger. Be sure the young people understand that service to others is ongoing and not limited to one season.

Holy Family

The Church celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family on the first Sunday after Christmas. This celebration is a great opportunity to invite families into a sense of renewal and blessing. Create a special blessing from liturgies and gatherings that families can also use in their homes. Ask a few families to write briefly about their Christmas traditions of prayer and faith-sharing, and publish their stories in the parish bulletin, newsletter, or on its Web site. Remember that families come in all shapes, sizes, and systems. Think of ways that the lives of single people, grandparents, empty-nesters, couples without children, and other family units can be touched by the generosity of adolescents.

Epiphany

Did you know that the Magi were kings from neighboring countries that practiced their faith in different ways? Even these wise men, who were not Jewish, came to see the newly born King of the Jews! The Epiphany is the revelation that Christmas happened. This is the "aha" moment that tells us, "This is an incredible event!" Because the Magi spent such effort to find and welcome Jesus, the Epiphany reminds Christians to open their hearts wide to the glory of God found in the birth of Jesus. The theme of welcoming, or hospitality, is evident during this time. The Epiphany can become a traditional time to offer home blessings to families. Depending on the size of your parish community, have designated prayer ministers offer blessings in each family's home. Or, create a take-home blessing that families can use

with extended family and friends. Use the Feast of the Epiphany to show young people that impossible things happen and that nothing is impossible with God. Remind young people of God's call to be open and welcoming to Christ in our lives.

JOURNEY OF FAITH FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS: AN OVERVIEW

We experience and express our faith in various ways. One way is through the use of the *Lectionary* at Mass. The readings tell the story of the Christian community's faith journey and highlight the teachings that are the core of who we are as Christian people. The activities in this manual will help the young people explore various Sunday readings and meet a variety of scriptural people. The young people will also explore some of the symbols of our sacramental tradition, such as light. By drawing from the Scriptures of the liturgical seasons and of our sacramental tradition, the participants will dig more deeply into their own faith and explore aspects of the community's faith tradition during these important seasons.

Each activity in this manual points to the readings for a designated week of the Advent or Christmas season. The activities highlight core ideas, themes, images, symbols, and meanings of the season. Essentially, each activity provides the structure, content, and context for continuing the Scripture reflection often begun at Sunday Eucharist. This format offers young people insight into and connection to what is happening in the parish community during the Church's celebration of the Advent and Christmas seasons. The activities are designed to encourage and challenge young adolescents to uncover what it means to be Jesus's disciple, how to act on the call to discipleship within their parish or school community, and how God works in and through their lives.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

You may present the materials in this manual in their entirety, or you may choose activities that will work best for the young people with whom you work. Each chapter begins with a brief overview and a listing of the Scripture readings for the week. The next element is a suggested schedule—a starting point that can be modified according to your circumstances. Each activity begins with a checklist of required materials and preparation, followed by a complete description of the activity procedure.

The activities in the Journey of Faith series follow a Study It! Live It! Pray It! format. The Study It! component comprises a 45- to 60-minute activity. In this component, the participants explore the theme in-depth through the Scriptures, activities, and discussion. Ministry leaders present additional background and information to periodically augment the participants' work. The student workbook is frequently used as a tool in these activities.

Live It! Longer activities allow you to extend a session to 90 minutes or longer. These activities connect what the participants have read, seen, written, and heard to their own lives.

Each activity includes opportunities and suggestions for prayer that are focused on the theme. Prayer forms include guided meditation, shared prayer, music, silence, prayers by young people, reflective reading, and experiences created by the participants. The Pray It! component gives the young people an opportunity to bring their insights and concerns to God in prayer. Prayer experiences range from 5 to 20 minutes.

The Student Workbook

The student workbook is an integrated resource for youth who are participating in the activities of the Journey of Faith series. All the activities in the manual are linked to the workbook. Ideally every young participant will have a workbook.

Preparing Yourself

Read each activity before you facilitate it, then use it creatively to meet the needs of the young people in your group. Knowing your audience will help you determine which strategies will work best. Some of the activities require preparation. Allow yourself adequate time to get ready. In addition, think about additional ways to include members of the parish community in the activity. Throughout the activities you will find suggestions for involving other parish adults in mentoring young people as they learn to be active participants in the life of the parish.

Standard Materials

To save time, consider gathering frequently used materials into bins and storing those bins in a place accessible to all staff and volunteer leaders. Here are some recommendations for organizing the bins.

Supply Bin

The following items appear frequently in the materials checklists:

- *The Catholic Youth Bible*, at least one for every two participants
- student workbooks, one for each participant
- masking tape
- cellophane tape
- washable and permanent markers (thick-line and thin-line)
- pens or pencils
- self-stick notes
- scissors
- newsprint
- blank paper, scrap paper, and notebook paper
- index cards
- baskets
- candles and matches
- items to create a prayer space (for example, a colored cloth, a cross, a bowl of water, and a vase for flowers)

Music Bin

Young people often find profound meaning in the music and lyrics of songs, both past and present. Also, the right music can set the appropriate mood for a prayer or an activity. Begin with a small collection of tapes or CDs in a music bin, and add to it over time. You might ask the young people to put some of their favorite music in the bin. The bin might include the following styles of music:

- *Prayerful, reflective instrumental music*. This kind of music is available in the adult alternative section of music stores. Labels that specialize in this music include Windham Hill and Narada.

- *Popular songs with powerful messages.* If you are not well-versed in popular music, ask the young people to offer suggestions.
- *The music of contemporary Catholic artists.* Many teens are familiar with the work of Catholic musicians such as Steve Angrisano, Sarah Hart, David W. Kauffman, Michael Mahler, Jesse Manibusan, and Danielle Rose.

Including copies of your parish's chosen hymnal is also a suitable option. You might also check with your liturgy or music director for recordings of parish hymns.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

We hope these activities will connect the young people to both their faith and their faith community in ways that will kindle the fire within them to better understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ and to act on that call.

YOUR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

Saint Mary's Press wants to know your reactions to the materials in the Journey of Faith series. We are open to all kinds of suggestions, including these:

- an alternative way to conduct an activity
- an audiovisual or other media resource that worked well with this material
- a book or an article you found helpful
- an original activity or process
- a prayer experience or service
- a helpful preparation for other leaders
- an observation about the themes or content of this material

If you have a comment or suggestion, please write to us at 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1318; call us at our toll-free number, 800-533-8095; or e-mail us at smp@smp.org.



Chapter 1

Have an Advent Attitude!



OVERVIEW

Young people are often criticized for having an attitude—a feeling, a particular approach, or a perspective on any given subject. But young Christians should have certain attitudes. Advent calls Christians to be joyful, patient, willing, prayerful, and intentional. Advent is also an opportunity to reflect on our sinfulness so we can be ready to accept the gift of the birth of Christ into our lives. Life is cyclical. Entering the season of Advent year after year is good because we often need that time of renewal to “readjust our attitude.”

We recall not only how people welcomed Jesus two thousand years ago, but also, once again, that Christ is present today. We take a cue from the Scriptures, which invite us to have an Advent attitude of awareness of God’s presence in the world and in all people. During this time, parishes are alive with preparations, inviting us into the mystery of Advent and the celebration of Jesus’s birth in ways that can easily include family and intergenerational participation. Inviting the parish social outreach or justice and service committees to be guests and participants in the activities offered in this book is an opportunity for the young people to witness faithful attitudes firsthand.

In these activities, the participants explore the call of servanthood in the Advent Scriptures and identify ways to make attitude adjustments as they prepare for the Christmas season. They will practice the skills of faith-sharing and using the Bible, as well as creating handicrafts.



READINGS

First Sunday of Advent

- **Cycle A:** Isaiah 2:1–5; Romans 13:11–14; Matthew 24:37–44
- **Cycle B:** Isaiah 63:16–17, 19; 64:2–7; 1 Corinthians 1:3–9; Mark 13:33–37
- **Cycle C:** Jeremiah 33:14–16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2; Luke 21:25–28, 34–36



AT A GLANCE

Icebreaker Attitude Charades (10 minutes)

Optional Activity Advent Wreath Blessing

STUDY IT! Scriptural Attitudes (25 minutes)

LIVE IT! An Advent Attitude Adjustment (20 minutes)

Watch While You Wait (15 minutes)

PRAY IT! Put on Christ (10 minutes)
Make Me Ready, Lord (10 minutes)

STUDY IT! Longer Parish
Families
Other Generations

LIVE IT! Longer The Value of Servanthood
Celebrate the Season

ICEBREAKER

Attitude Charades (10 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - index cards, one set of eight for each small group
 - newsprint
 - a marker
- On each card in a set, write a different attitude word from the following list:
 - mean
 - excited
 - in love
 - bored
 - worried
 - silly
 - sorry
 - pleased

1. Divide the participants into small groups of five to eight. Then distribute one set of index cards to each small group, telling the participants to keep the cards facedown so no one can see what's written on them. Consider the group as a whole when determining whether to create separate groups for participating adults or mixed groups that include the adults and the young people. You may need to remind the adults that the young people are the focus of the activity.

2. Review with the groups the following rules of charades:

- One group member, the actor, at a time will choose an index card and act out the word written on that card. All other members of your group will try to guess what that person is doing. Once the group has guessed the correct word, another group member will choose a new index card, which contains a different word. Each member of the group must do at least one charade.
- The actor must not talk or make sounds and can use only gestures and facial expressions to convey the meaning of the word.
- In this game of charades, all the cards name an attitude—an emotion, approach, or perspective that affects behavior.
- The game ends with the first group to guess all eight attitudes.

3. Have each group designate its first "actor." That person should then take the top card and silently read the word written on it. After all the actors have read their words, tell them to begin acting out their words.

4. Once a group has guessed all eight attitudes, stop the game. Ask the groups to each select their best charade actors to demonstrate how they acted out their attitude words. Make sure that all eight attitudes are demonstrated.

5. Close the icebreaker by inviting the young people to respond to the following questions. Encourage the adult participants to listen for new insights and understandings they may learn from the young people.

- What does our attitude say about what we are truly thinking?
- What attitudes about Advent do you think a Christian should have? [List the responses to this question on newsprint and save it for step 6 of the “Scriptural Attitudes” activity.]
- What do these Advent attitudes say about how we are called to think and act in preparation for Christmas?

Variation. For added visual interest and application, ask the small groups to each come forward to act out one of the Advent attitudes listed on the newsprint from step 5.

Variation. When the young people are gathered with their parents, form mixed groups that include pairs, each consisting of a parent and a young person. Have each pair act out a charade as a team in their group.



OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Advent Wreath Blessing

Each time you gather the young people during Advent, it is important to expose them to the parish rituals and traditions of the season in a way that they can participate.

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - an Advent wreath with three purple candles and one pink candle
 - matches or a lighter
 - a small table covered with a cloth
 - The Catholic Youth Bible* or another Bible
 - Journey of Faith for Advent and Christmas (Advent and Christmas)* workbooks
- Set up the small table in a corner of the gathering space. Place an Advent wreath and a Bible on it.

1. Gather the participants around the table. Before the lighting of the Advent wreath candle, explain the tradition in these or similar words:

- Catholics have traditions that help them celebrate the liturgical seasons and the story of their faith. One of the most recognizable symbols is the Advent wreath used by churches and families for the four weeks before Christmas.
- The wreath—a circle that has no beginning or end—symbolizes the eternity of God, who always was and always will be. God is the alpha and the omega—the beginning and the end.
- The wreath resides in a place of honor, just as we put God at the center of our lives, to remind us of our own mortality and the everlasting life promised to us through Christ.

- The circle is also a reminder that as Earth revolves around the sun and the seasons change, so do our lives revolve around the God from whom all life flows.
2. Explain to the group that the candles represent the four weeks of Advent and that the colors of the candles are significant. Make the following points in these or similar words:
 - The three purple candles remind us that Advent is a time for prayer and reflection as we prepare for Christmas.
 - The pink candle is for the Third Sunday of Advent when we anticipate Christmas joy.
 3. Remind the young people that Advent is a time of preparation for the birth of Jesus, who is the light of the world. Offer this comment:
 - As we light each candle, we look forward with joy and hope to our celebration of our Lord's first coming into the world, and we anticipate the Second Coming, when he will come again in glory.
 4. Light one purple candle, or invite one of the young people to light it. Ask the participants to pray the following prayer, which they will find on page 7 of their *Advent and Christmas* workbooks:

Some things cannot be rushed. O God of Love, as we light this candle, we pray for the grace to wait patiently. Your people waited for so long for the coming of a savior. We too are anxious for the celebration of your coming. We pray to be ready and alert, always trying to live the life you want for us. We light this candle in the name of Jesus, the Christ, who comes as Light to the world. Amen.

(This activity is adapted from Janet Claussen and Marilyn Kielbasa, *Ministry Ideas for Celebrating Advent and Christmas with Teens, Families, and Parishes*, pp. 17–21.)

STUDY IT!

Scriptural Attitudes (25 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - Advent and Christmas* workbooks
 - pens or pencils
 - Catholic Youth Bibles* or other bibles, one for each small group
 - newsprint
 - markers
 - newsprint with the list of attitudes from the icebreaker

1. Divide the participants into three, six, or nine groups of four to eight people. The total number of groups should be divisible by three to correspond to the three Scripture readings for the First Sunday of Advent.

2. Direct the young people to open their *Advent and Christmas* workbooks to page 7. Assign the three readings—first, second, and Gospel reading—for the First Sunday of Advent, one reading to a group. Continue assigning the same readings until all the groups have a reading. Have the young people locate their groups' assigned readings in the Bible.

3. Give the participants the following instructions:

- The readings you have been assigned are from the readings for the first Sunday in the season of Advent. Throughout Advent, you will hear these and similar readings at Mass.
- Choose one member of your group to be the reader. The reader in your group will first silently read the assigned reading and then read the selected passage to your group.
- As you listen to the reading, think about this question: What does this Scripture reading tell us about how we should act or what kind of attitude we should have during Advent?
- During the reading, list as many answers to the question as possible in the space provided in your workbook under “Scriptural Attitudes” and then be ready to share with your group.

4. Distribute one sheet of newsprint and a marker to each group. Instruct the readers to begin their readings, first silently and then to their groups. If during the reading, the young people are having difficulty answering the questions, suggest that they pay attention to the verbs the writer used, especially words in the imperative voice, such as *rejoice* and *give thanks*, or to instructions given by the writer of the Scripture readings. After the readers finish, have the young people share with the members of their groups their responses to the question that they wrote during the reading. After sharing, they should then write their responses on the newsprint.

5. Invite one young person from each group to share her or his responses to the question, What does this Scripture reading tell us about how we should act or what kind of attitude we should have during Advent? Possible responses are “love,” “confirm,” “be not lacking in any spiritual gift,” “pray earnestly,” “put on Christ,” and “live to please God.”

6. Advise the young people that the lists they compiled contain words of action and attitude—emotions, feelings, ways of behaving. Their lists describe how the people hearing the readings are supposed to act or respond to God’s presence in their lives. Tell the young people their responses will help them determine what kind of attitude the writer is telling us we should have during Advent. Refer to the list generated in the opening icebreaker and note similarities and additions between that list and the lists compiled by the young people.

7. Summarize the activity by noting the following in these or similar words:

- One of the overriding attitudes that emerges in each reading is that of awareness of God, along with a sense of waiting that is patient and not anxious.
- These scriptural attitudes tend to be *countercultural*, meaning that they are a contrast to what society, the media, and pop culture tend to focus on during Advent. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we often feel stressed and anxious as we try to fit in as many activities, parties, and shopping trips as possible before Christmas.
- In addition, much of the writer’s advice challenges the readers to have an attitude of repentance. This attitude should be marked by discernment, avoidance of sin, patient waiting, abstinence from evil, and following the commandments.

- Our attitude as we prepare for Christmas demands that we turn away from selfishness and be open to the presence of God in Jesus Christ. An example is to focus on where we see the face of Jesus in other people during this season—our friends, those who are poor or homeless, parents—and not to focus all the time on gifts we receive or on how many parties we attend.

If adults have participated in this activity, consider inviting one of them to conclude the activity by relating a personal experience based on the theme.

LIVE IT!

An Advent Attitude Adjustment (20 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - newsprint lists from “Scriptural Attitudes”
 - newsprint
 - a marker
 - tape
 - Advent and Christmas* workbooks
 - pens or pencils
 - cups or bowls, each containing at least four types or colors of beads. Depending on the size of the beads, provide enough beads so that each participant can make at least one bracelet, necklace, or fob.
 - string, one 12-inch piece per participant

1. Have the participants gather in the same groups they were in during the “Scriptural Attitudes” activity. Return to each group its newsprint from that activity. Have the groups each brainstorm ways their members can practice each of the Advent attitudes they found in their Scripture passages during that activity. Allow 3 to 5 minutes for brainstorming. Challenge the participants to name concrete ways that they will practice joy, demonstrate love to others, be patient, and so on.

2. Next, ask the groups to choose their five best Advent-attitudes practices from the list they compiled on their newsprint.

3. Allow a few minutes for the groups to make their choices. Each group should then select one group member to present the group’s five best Advent-attitudes practices. List those practices on newsprint and then post the newsprint where everyone can see it.

4. Invite the large group to study for a few moments the list of Advent attitudes on the posted newsprint. Then ask them to vote (by voice or by hand) on the top ten Advent attitudes they would like to practice. Direct the young people to write their choices in the space provided under “Ten Practices for an Advent Attitude” on page 8 of their *Advent and Christmas* workbooks and then circle the four they most want to work on during this Advent season.

5. Place the cups or bowls of beads in the center of the room. Distribute the string. Invite the participants to each choose four different styles or colors of beads. Tell them to add the beads to their string—using only the four styles or colors they chose—to create a bracelet, a necklace, or a fob for their knapsack. The beaded item they create will be a

reminder of the four Advent practices they chose to help them have an Advent attitude. Refer the young people to the choices they just listed in their workbooks and tell them to write the four Advent attitudes they circled in the space provided in the four beads on page 8 of their workbooks. Suggest that they focus on one of the four Advent practices during each of the four weeks of Advent and encourage them to share their commitment with a family member or the entire family.

6. Encourage the young people to look for examples of how the parish community practices the same four attitudes they will be practicing and how the parish avoids the usual stress and anxiety of the Advent season. Suggest to the young people that if they notice important attitudes, they might add them to their own lists in their workbooks. You might also want to encourage the young people to note whether these attitudes are evident only during Advent.

7. If appropriate, invite the participants to share their bead creations, including their four practices, with their small groups. (If adults participated in this activity, consider allowing a few moments for one of them to share how he or she practices an Advent attitude in everyday life.)

Watch While You Wait (15 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - Advent and Christmas* workbooks
 - pens or pencils
 - construction paper, one-half sheet for each participant
 - scissors, one for every four or five participants
 - ribbon, one 6-inch piece for each participant
 - markers, one for each participant
 - tape

1. Instruct the young people to turn to “Watch While You Wait” on page 9 of their *Advent and Christmas* workbooks and fill out the lists in the space provided. Allow a few minutes for them to complete this task. The young people will complete the following three lists:

- five things they are waiting for as they wait for Christmas
- three things worth waiting for and working toward at this time in their lives
- one thing worth waiting for in their relationship with God

2. Invite the young people to share with a partner some of the list items they wrote in their workbooks.

3. Ask the young people the following question:

- When something is worth waiting for, what do you do to help you get through the waiting?

Look for answers such as “work hard,” “pray,” and “be patient.” Be prepared to give them some guidance if they struggle with finding answers. Remind the young people that these

are skills to be used while waiting. Highlight and reinforce the skills they name that are especially important in a person's faith life, such as praying. Ask the young people to record one or two of the skills in their workbooks under "Skills for Watching While You Wait" on page 9. Explain to the participants that Christians are aware of, or watch, what they do during the Advent season. We should be paying attention to how we act and interact with others. Advent is a time to learn more about the importance of being selfless.

4. When the young people have finished recording their thoughts, distribute the construction paper, scissors, ribbon, and markers. Invite the participants to choose one skill or action from step 3 that they want to practice during Advent. Once the participants have chosen the skill, they are to cut an ornament out of the construction paper and write the skill on the ornament. Invite them to decorate their ornaments as interest and time allow. Make tape available so they can tape their ribbons to their ornaments for hanging. Encourage the participants to take their ornaments home and put them on their Christmas trees or in a special place to remind them to practice their "watching while you wait" skill during Advent.

Variation. Set up a tree in the youth room or gathering area of the church or school. Have the young people hang their ornaments on the tree so their handiwork can be viewed by all. You might need to post an explanation near the tree so others will understand.

PRAY IT!

Put on Christ (10 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - words and lyrics to "The Servant Song," by Richard Gillard, or another song familiar to the participants. Choose a song with a theme related to service in the community, awareness of actions, thinking of others, or God's calling.
 - The Catholic Youth Bible* or another Bible
 - Advent and Christmas* workbooks
- Choose a reading or a portion of a reading from the current liturgical cycle for the present week of Advent. The selection should specifically remind the reader to put on Christ, act like Christ, or follow the Word of God.

1. Gather everyone into a circle. Open prayer by inviting the participants to join in singing the selected song.

2. Continue prayer in the following manner:

Leader: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader:

We gather together, rooted in the presence of God, to praise him with hearts full of awareness of God's presence, waiting patiently for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us open our ears to hear the Word of God.

3. Proclaim the reading you chose.

4. Invite the young people to briefly share with a partner how they will choose to put on Christ this Advent season—by being kind to others, participating in service to the community, praying for peace, and so on. Suggest that they recall examples from the previous activities in this chapter. After a few moments, ask for volunteers to share with the whole group. Ask the volunteers how they know when God is present in acts of service and invite their responses.

Variation. If as part of the LIVE IT! activity, the participants shared their bead creations with their small-group members, invite them now to also offer a personal prayer for each person in their group or for themselves (out loud or in their journals) as they journey through Advent. Suggest that they draw upon the Advent attitudes that the four beads represent and that they recorded in their workbooks.

5. Pray together the following “Prayer for the Spirit of Christian Joy,” which is also found on page 10 of their workbooks:

God of joy and gladness,
look upon us as we begin this Advent time.
Open our hearts and minds to the coming of your Son.
Fill our lives with the Spirit of anticipation
so that as we prepare for Christmas,
we will know the joy of your Love.
Let peace abound and let justice flourish,
that every nation on earth
will shout with the joy that comes through Jesus,
God with us, forever and ever. Amen.

Make Me Ready, Lord (10 minutes)

Materials and Preparation

- Gather the following items:
 - words and lyrics to “Prepare the Way of the Lord,” by Jacques Berthier, for opening, and “Prepare Ye,” by Stephen Schwartz, for closing, or two songs with a similar theme
 - The Catholic Youth Bible* or another Bible
 - Advent and Christmas* workbooks
- Select two readers, one for the Gospel and one for the litany. Allow the readers time before prayer begins to prepare by first silently reading through their selections: Matthew 3:1–6 and the “Litany of Readiness” on page 10 of the workbook.

1. Gather the participants into a circle and invite them to join in singing the opening song.

2. Continue prayer in the following manner:

Leader: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

3. Ask the first reader to proclaim Matthew 3:1–6.

4. Invite the participants to repond, "Make me ready, Lord," at the appropriate places during the following litany, which can be found on page 10 of the *Advent and Christmas* workbook. Invite the second reader to lead the litany.

Litany of Readiness

Leader: When Jesus comes again,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

Leader: When my family challenges me,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

Leader: When my friends need me,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

Leader: When I am stressed at school,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

Leader: When I make tough decisions,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

Leader: When my faith is weak,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

Leader: When the parish asks me to use my gifts,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

Leader: When God calls me,

All: Make me ready, Lord.

5. Close by asking the participants to join in singing the closing song.

STUDY IT! LONGER

Parish

Use the bead activity to create a parishwide Advent reminder. Instead of having the participants make their own beaded creations, enlist the young people (and their parents if they are present) to make beaded reminders to hand out to parishioners at Mass on Sunday or during another parish community function, such as an Advent reconciliation service or other Advent gathering. Include a brief explanation to parishioners. Or invite a young person and her or his parent to share their insights about Advent during Sunday Mass, either at the end of the homily or during announcements at liturgy. Instead of distributing the bead reminders, consider sharing with the parishioners the idea of using the bead reminder as a home activity. You might publish the information in the parish bulletin or photocopy the instructions and make them available after Mass.

Families

Give the young people materials and instructions to take home and teach their family members how to make their own beaded Advent reminders.

Other Generations

Gather the young people with a parish group, such as the quilting or craft group or the altar society. Ask the members of the group you meet with to share creative Advent reminder ideas with the young people. Their ideas could include projects that use fabric, wood, or

another medium. Or gather the young people with the adult Bible study group to discuss Saint Paul's letters to the early Christians. Several of these letters are read at Mass during Advent.

LIVE IT! LONGER

The Value of Servanthood

Working with your parish social outreach coordinator, create several opportunities for the young people to serve the community during Advent. Such serving activities might involve their peers, their parents or other family members, and other parishioners. Consider the following examples:

- Enlist young people to collect, sort, or help deliver the gifts received from a giving-tree project.
- Plan a day to travel to a local children's shelter to put on a party for resident families. Have the young people lead games and craft activities for the younger children.
- Research local service opportunities already in progress in the community. Generate a list of ideas for the young people to take home for family participation.
- Invite one family per liturgy to light the candles on the parish's Advent wreath at the beginning of Mass.
- Ask the young people to help decorate the church with trees or other ornamentation, including the purple altar cloths. Even though decorating the church can be time consuming, inviting young people to participate for even a short time will foster a sense of appreciation and inclusiveness in the usual decorators and a sense of accomplishment and ownership in the young people.
- Introduce alternative gift giving to the young people and their families. Provide Web sites and contact information on how they can give gifts that are socially just in their production and distribution.
- Ask the young people what they want to do to help others. You might be pleasantly surprised by how much they want to do and by the creative ideas they have. For example, they might be willing to surprise a neighbor (or their parents) by shoveling snow without being paid, working at a soup kitchen every week during Advent, reading stories to children in younger grades, or writing letters of thanksgiving and hope to members of the military.

Celebrate the Season

Invite the young people to put into action the following ideas:

- With your family, select an organization to support with money you collect. At the start of Advent, decide on a percentage to donate. Then use that percentage to figure how much you will give of the total amount you spend for Christmas gifts. Plan to present the collection gift to the organization on Epiphany, the day the Magi offered their gifts to Jesus.
- Be a surprise to someone else while you're waiting this Advent season. Greet those around you while waiting in the lunch line. Offer a note of appreciation to a teacher, a legislator, or a business that promotes an appropriate understanding of Christmas. Sincerely compliment someone.