

Family Faith Formation

Advent & Christmas 2026



What’s Inside

- Advent Activities for Children & Families
- Podcast and Book Recommendations
- Reflection for Parents
- Faith-Filled Gift Ideas
- Sacred Art
- Coloring and Activity Pages

Monthly Devotions

Dec: Mary’s Immaculate Conception

The December 8 feast (a Holy Day of Obligation) celebrates the truth that Mary was kept free from original sin from the very first moment of her life. Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception is the patroness of the United States!

The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas!

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus, came as a tiny baby in a lowly manger, born to Mary and her humble carpenter husband, Joseph.



Jan: The Holy Name of Jesus

"In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth" (Phil 2:10). During this feast on January 3, we express love and reverence for the Holy Name of Jesus, remembering its power and sanctity and always speaking it with profound love, respect, and reverence.

Prayer to Memorize: The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Winter Feast Days

- November 30 - St. Andrew the Apostle
- December 3 - St. Francis Xavier
- December 6 - St. Nick’s Day!
- **December 8 - Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Holy Day of Obligation)**
- December 9 - St. Juan Diego
- December 12 - Our Lady of Guadalupe
- December 13 - St. Lucia
- December 15 - St. John of the Cros
- December 22 - The Holy Family
- December 25 - Christmas!!
- **January 1 - Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)**
- January 3 - Holy Name of Jesus
- January 6 - Epiphany
- January 11 - Baptism of the Lord

Visio Divina

The Annunciation, Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1898



Look: How do you think Mary felt when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her?

Reflect: Mary trusted God even though she didn't know what would happen next. When is it hard for us to trust God?

Act: Mary said yes to God. What is one way uour family can say yes to God this Advent?

The Nativity at Night, Geertgen tot Sint Jans, 1490



Look: Where is the light coming from in this painting and why do you think the artist chose to portray Jesus that way?

Reflect: How can we make room for the light of Christ in our hearts and homes during Advent?

Act: What is one way your family can share the light of Christ with someone else this Advent? Consider an act of kindness, helping someone in need, or spending time with someone who may be lonely.

Young Children's Winter Activities



Turn Chocolate Santas into St. Nicholas!

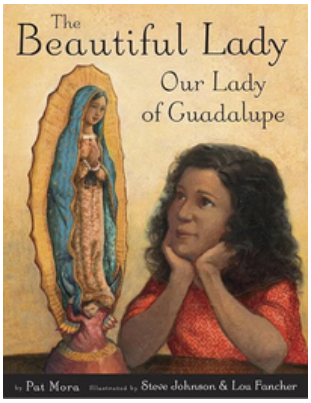
Grab a chocolate foiled Santa. Make a miter with cross, out of construction paper. Then use a gold metallic pipe cleaner to create a crozier. Use glue dots to attach each to the foil Santa.

St. Nicholas Prayer

Dear Jesus, You gave St. Nicholas a heart of charity and generosity. Give me too a desire to share what I have with others.
Amen.

Be sure to leave your shoes out the night before St. Nick's day! He may leave you traditional treats like oranges and chocolate!





Read a new story about Our Lady of Guadalupe!

"The Beautiful Lady: Our Lady of Guadalupe"
by Pat Mora

Free Children's Printables Coloring and Activity Pages

Raising Wild Saints provides these seasonally for free if you subscribe to their newsletter!



Epiphany Door Blessing with Chalk

Bless your house on the feast of the Epiphany using blessed chalk. Follow this Guide from Catholic Icing!



Older Children's Winter Activities

St. Lucy's Feast Day

St Lucy's feast Day on December 13th is a cherished celebration of hope, charity, and the symbolism of light during the darkest time of the year. Consider making homemade cinnamon rolls and hanging lights to celebrate the hope of the advent season.



A Few Good Reads



Advent and Christmas: One Day at a Time for Catholic Teens
by Katie Prejean McGrady, Tommy McGrady



Bell and the Joyful Mysteries
by Sally Read

Make a Dried Orange Garland for the Feast of St. Nicholas

See this tutorial and other ways to celebrate from Be A Heart





Easy King Cake for The Epiphany

Put canned cinnamon rolls in a bundt pan and bake. After icing, add purple, green, and gold sprinkles!



Immaculate Conception Snowflakes

Make and hang paper snowflakes on Mary's feast day!

Family Activities for Advent

"Advent, this powerful liturgical season that we are beginning, invites us to pause in silence to understand a presence. It is an invitation to understand that the individual events of the day are hints that God is giving us, signs of the attention he has for each one of us." - Pope Benedict XVI

Make Space for Prayer

Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year. It is a wonderful time to dedicate space in your home for prayer (or to refresh an existing space!). Here is a good resource if you're looking for more inspiration. "For the house is a little church." - St. John Chrysostom

Devote time to a family Holy Hour (or half-hour!)

Visit the adoration chapel at Christ the King (code: 5464*). Come adore Jesus in the Eucharist every Sunday of Advent from 5pm-Midnight (except 12/20, 2-11pm). St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "The mystery of the Eucharist gives us the joy of having Christmas every day."

Reach Out

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." -John 1:5. The light of Christ is coming. Is there anyone in your family's life who could use a sign of hope? Make a special effort to to pray, visit, call, or write a note to that person.

Choose a Faith-based Advent Calendar

This Works of Mercy Advent Calendar is a creative way to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy while counting down to Christmas. You could even make one yourself. This is perfect for anyone who wants to start a simple Advent tradition!

Pray the St. Andrew's Christmas Novena

The St. Andrew's Christmas novena will draw your heart and mind to "the hour and moment" of Christ's birth. Challenge your family to memorize and recite this prayer everyday from the Feast of St. Andrew (November 30th) until Christmas Eve. If you're feeling ambitious, follow the traditional novena and pray it 15 times a day!

Celebrate the Feast days of St. Juan Diego (12/9) and Our Lady of Guadalupe (12/12)

Go to Mass! St. Monica parish offers beautiful Masses and celebrations honoring these two feast days. St. Juan Diego was an Indigenous Nahua - did you know guacamole originates from the Nahua? Make or buy some guacamole to celebrate this feast day! Decorate your home with roses for Our Lady. Roses were not in season when Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego, but they were miraculously blooming where he met her!

Reflect on the O Antiphons in the Final Days of Advent

The O Antiphons are a beautiful part of our liturgical tradition that date back to the 8th century. Learn about the O Antiphons and their connections to the Old Testament and New Testament. The Latin version presents a hidden acrostic message that will tie everything together (ERO CRAS)!



Donate Baby Items

Our Lady of Guadalupe is also known as the patroness of the unborn. Honor her this month by donating baby-essentials to the Gabriel Project in the parish vestibule. Join us for a special Moms' Night of fellowship and service on Tuesday, December 8 at 7pm.

Go to Confession as a Family

"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." In addition to 4-5pm on Saturdays, there will be Confessions every Saturday in Advent from 8:30-9:30am.

Reflection for Parents

An Invitation to Wonder

Excerpts from a Reflection by Emily Stimpson Chapman

Last week, my son and I sat together on his bedroom floor, while he stared enraptured at … of all things … his humidifier. My busy, constantly-on-the-move toddler continued to sit there, almost motionless, for 10 whole minutes, doing nothing but wondering at the mysteriously magical puffs of cool steam rising up into the air.

I sat there wondering with him. Partly, I wondered where we should put the thing, now that he's discovered it, so that it's safely out of reach. But more fundamentally, I wondered at him — at his pure delight in the most ordinary of moments and the most ordinary of things.

Right now, the whole world is a wonder to him. Everything in creation, from a squirrel scampering across the lawn to the chime on my parents' mantle clock, is cause for contemplation. He stops for it all, acknowledges it all, and wants me to acknowledge it, too. He claps. He points. He cries out with glee. And with a "Mama! Mama!" demands that I share in his joy.

This pausing to wonder at steam and garbage trucks, birds on the wire and the schoolhouse lights hanging over our kitchen island has taken some adjusting on my part. Once, not too many years ago, it wouldn't have been that difficult; I'm naturally inclined to delight in the ordinary. But these days, life doesn't leave me a lot of time for delighting. There are too many other things competing for my attention: deadlines and meetings, laundry and cleaning, meal planning and grocery shopping, plus one very busy toddler who races from one death-defying stunt to the next.

In the midst of our current crazy, my inclination is to ignore the small stuff and focus on whatever is most urgent. "If it's not urgent, I don't have time for it," I've said repeatedly over the past year.

But the little child toddling about my house is having none of that attitude. His job right now — his great work in life — seems to be twofold: wondering at the world and getting Mama to wonder at it, too. He will not be dissuaded from amazement at gravity and rainbows and diaper bags full of stuff, and he will not be dissuaded from making Mama share in that amazement.

The boy does not brook disagreement. And for that, I'm grateful. Because the world is a wonder. Every atom in it is worthy of amazement. Squirrels and bells and wind really are occasions for delight and awe. They are all gifts from a good and loving God. Like everything in the universe, they wouldn't exist without him. He holds them in being. And he does that for a purpose. Through all these things, he somehow blesses us, teaches us, helps us and saves us. My baby instinctively sees the miracle of it all. And he helps me see it, too. The Christ Child does the same… continue reading here

Podcasts and Book Club

Saints Alive Podcast Episodes

St. Nicholas



Little Drummer Boy



St. Juan Diego





Let Love Podcast

Check out Season 12 "Prepare for Peace" a six episode series on Advent: "Where you are peace-less, look up - that's where He is coming. Where I can't, He comes. In your need is the next encounter, so do not be afraid! "I can't" isn't the end of the story - it's the beginning of Advent."

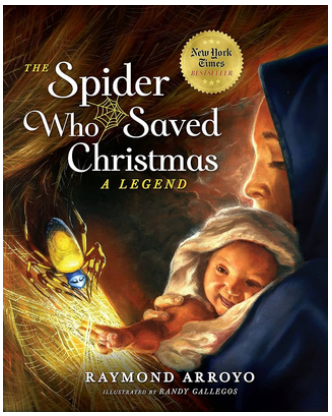


Votive Podcast

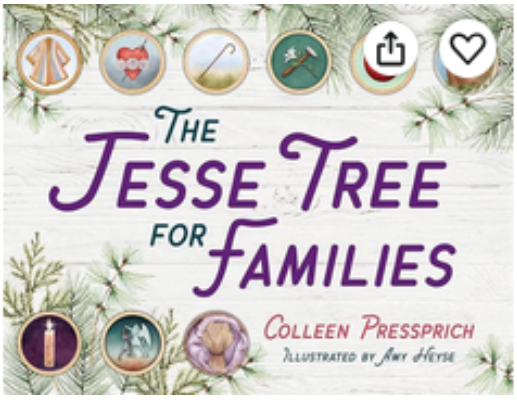
The Votive podcast hosts a variety of writers and artists who discuss the value of sharing good and beautiful storytelling through art and literature as a way to evangelize. This Advent episode features Catholic writer Laura Kelly Fanucci.

The Spider Who Saved Christmas

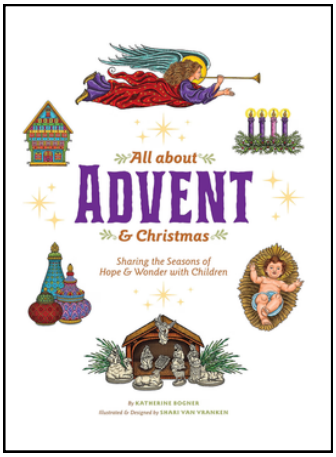
from Ignatius Books



Jesse Tree for Families

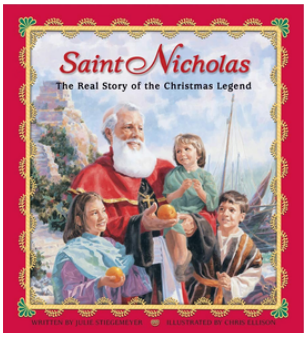


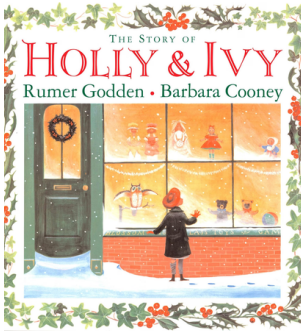
All About Advent and Christmas



Family Read Alouds

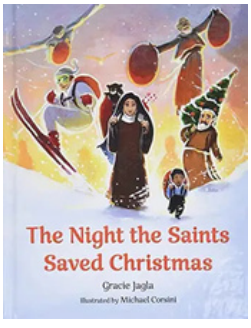












Faith Filled Gift Ideas: Younger Children

Holy Pajamas!?

Looking for matching family pajamas for the holiday? Check out HolyPals for fun pajamas with a bible verse sewen into every pattern!



My First Examen Board Book

from The Little Rose Shop



Jesus Bandaids

from Be A Heart



Wooden Mass Set

from Brother Francis Store



Princesses of Heaven: The Jewels Children's Book

from Word on Fire



Religious Print Muslin Baby Blankets

from The Little Rose Shop



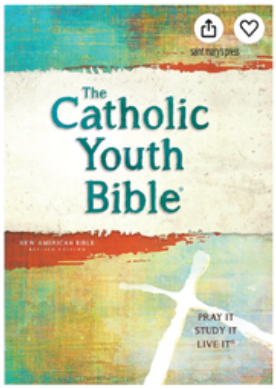
Faith Filled Gift Ideas: Older Children

7 Deadly Dragons Book Series

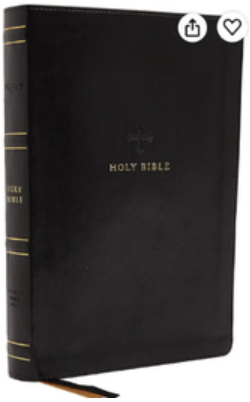
from Extraordinary Mission



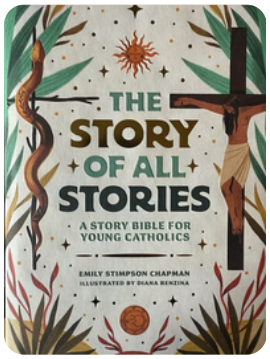
Invest in a nice Bible for your pre-teen or teen!



Catholic Youth Bible from St. Mary's Press (NABRE)



Catholic Bible (NRSV) Catholic Bible Press

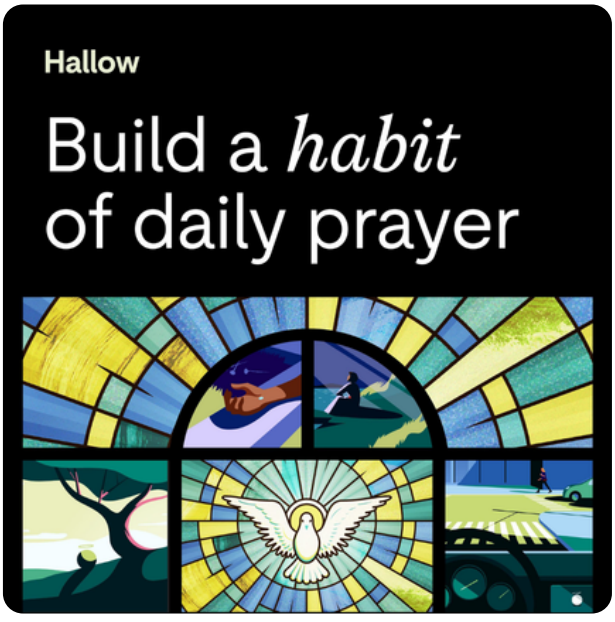


The Story of All Stories

from Word on Fire

Hallow App

A prayer app with content for all ages. Both free and paid prayers - try it free for 90-days.



Stocking Stuffers

Tiny Saints Charms



Sockreligious Socks



Advent Wreath Booklet from Look to Him and Be Radiant

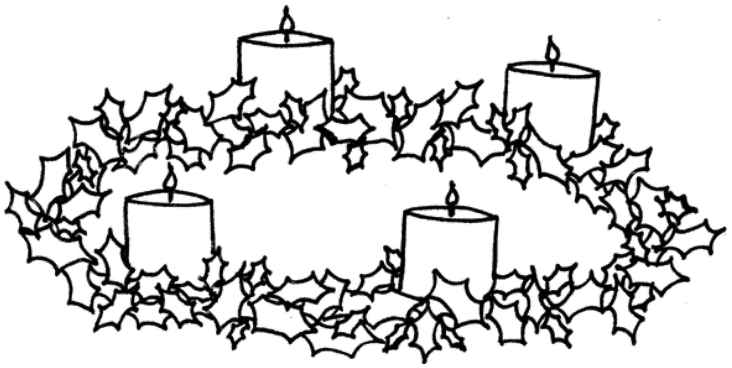
Print the following pages back to back to create a little booklet to use as you light your Advent wreath candles each week.

Hope
Peace
Joy
Love

"When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming." ~CCC 524

the Advent Wreath

Weekly Prayers with Bible Verses from
the Sunday Mass Readings for Year B



Hope Peace Joy Love

The Advent Wreath

The Advent Wreath is comprised of four candles, one lit each Sunday of the Season of Advent. The three purple candles bring to mind the royalty of the coming Messiah. The rose candle, lit on the third Sunday (Gaudete Sunday) means "rejoice" and represents the joy we feel as Christmas nears. A fifth white candle, often placed in the center of the wreath, can be lit during the octave of Christmas. The evergreen boughs that make up the wreath represent the new life we have in Christ.

Traditions:

- Set up your Advent Wreath in a central location, like the dinner table. Light the candles while gathered for family meals.
- Read Scripture selection from the Mass readings and sing O Come, O Come Emmanuel as you light the candles.
- Share family prayer intentions and thanksgivings.
- Use the prayers to the right to remember the meaning of each candle.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." ~Isaiah 9:1

First Week of Advent: Hope

- "Be watchful! Be alert! Youdo notknowwhenthe time will come." ~Mark 13:33-37
- How did you watch for Jesus today?
- *Dear Lord, help us to watch for You in all the little parts of our days. Fill us with hope as we think of the plans You have for us. Amen.*

Second Week of Advent: Peace

- "Prepare the way of theLord, make straightHis paths."~Mark 1:1-8
- How can our family prepare a place for Jesus?
- *Jesus,helpmakeourhome a place of peacethis Advent as we prepare for Your coming. Amen.*

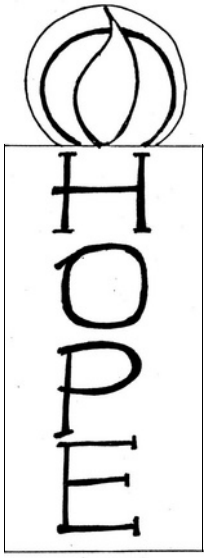
Third Week of Advent: Joy

- "A man named John was sent fromGod. He came... so that all might believe through him.He was not the light, but cameto testify to the light. ~John 1:6-8,19-28
- How can we be a light to people around us?
- *Father,YousentYourSon to bringlight to the world.Helpourfamilytobealightofjoytoo!Amen.*

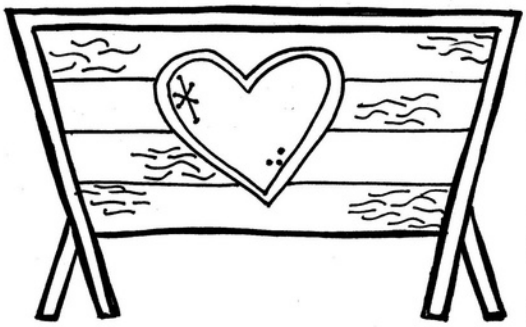
Fourth Week of Advent: Love

- "Behold, you will conceivein yourwombandbear a son,and you shall namehim Jesus.~Luke1:26-38
- Howcan wemake ourlives a gift to Jesus?
- *Holy Spirit, fill our hearts with love so that we can share the gift of Jesus with everyone we meet, especially during the Christmas Season. Amen.*

from Look to Him and be Radiant







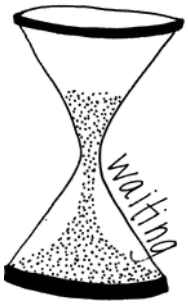








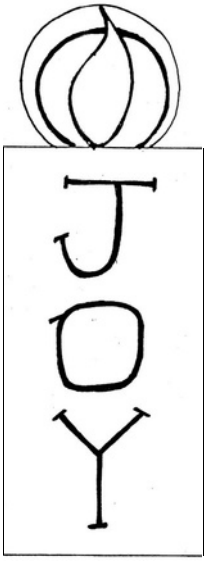
Advent



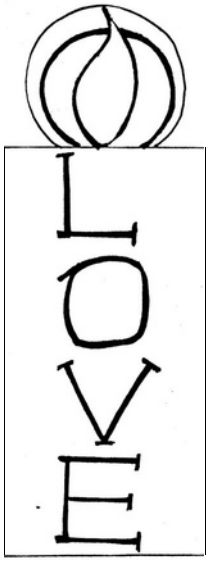
O Come O Come Emmanuel





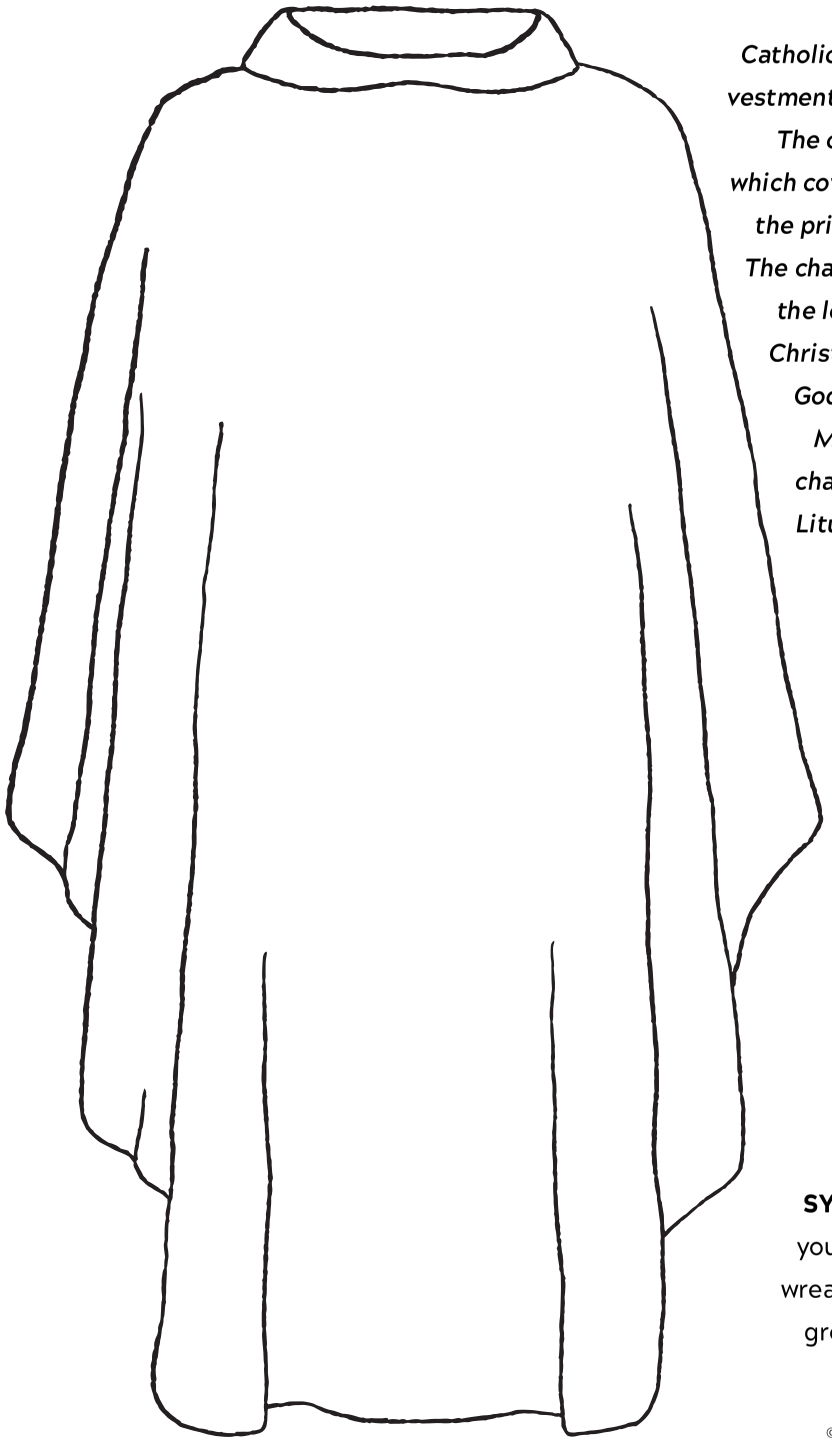






from Look to Him and Be Radiant

Design-an-Advent-Chasuble



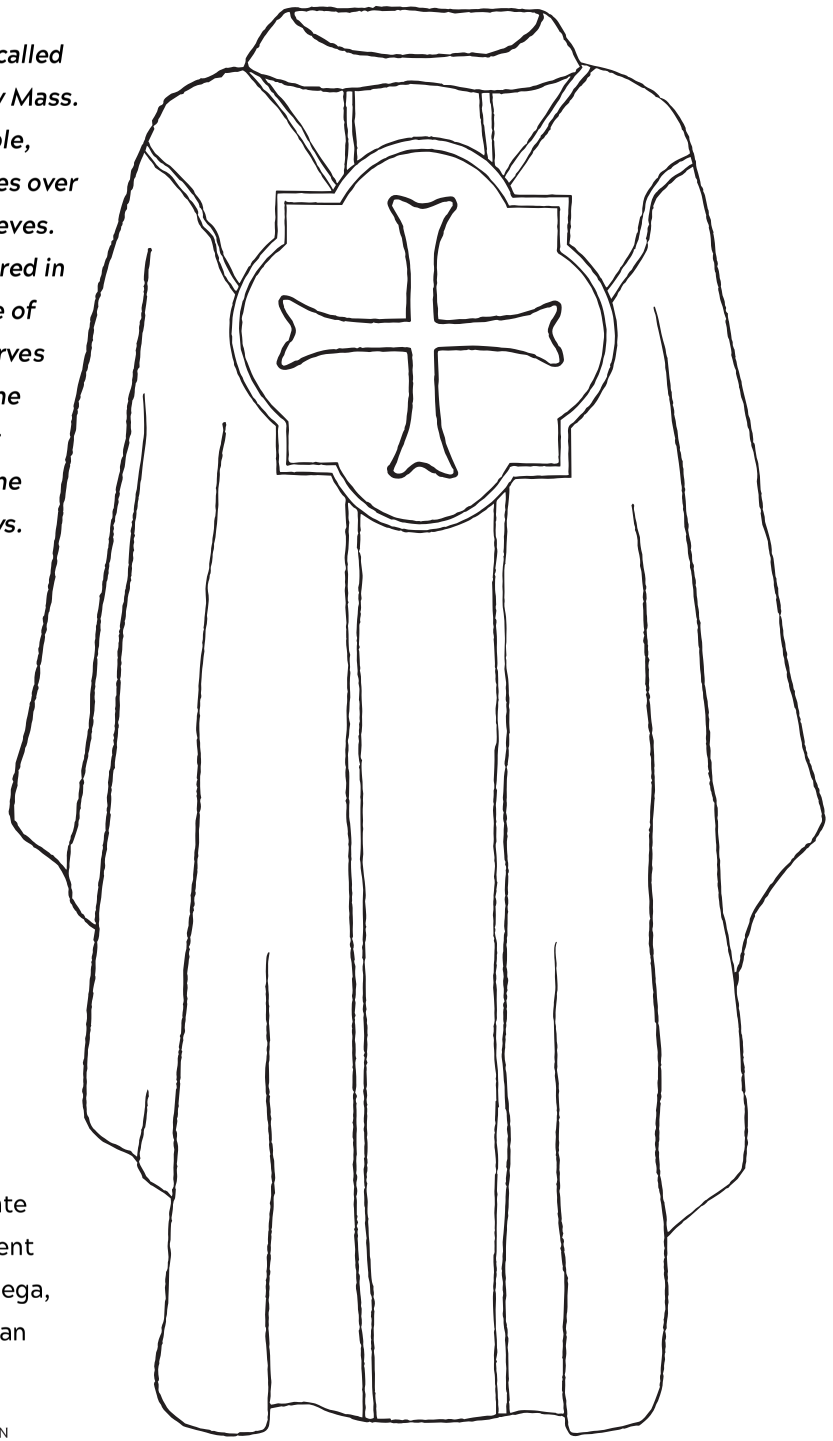
Catholic priests wear special clothing, called vestments, when they celebrate the Holy Mass. The outermost vestment is a chasuble, which covers all his other clothing. It goes over the priest's head and doesn't have sleeves. The chasuble reminds us of being covered in the love of Jesus as well as the "yoke of Christ" carried by the priest as he serves God's people, especially through the Mass. A priest will wear different chasubles to match the colors of the Liturgical Year or special feast days.

✝

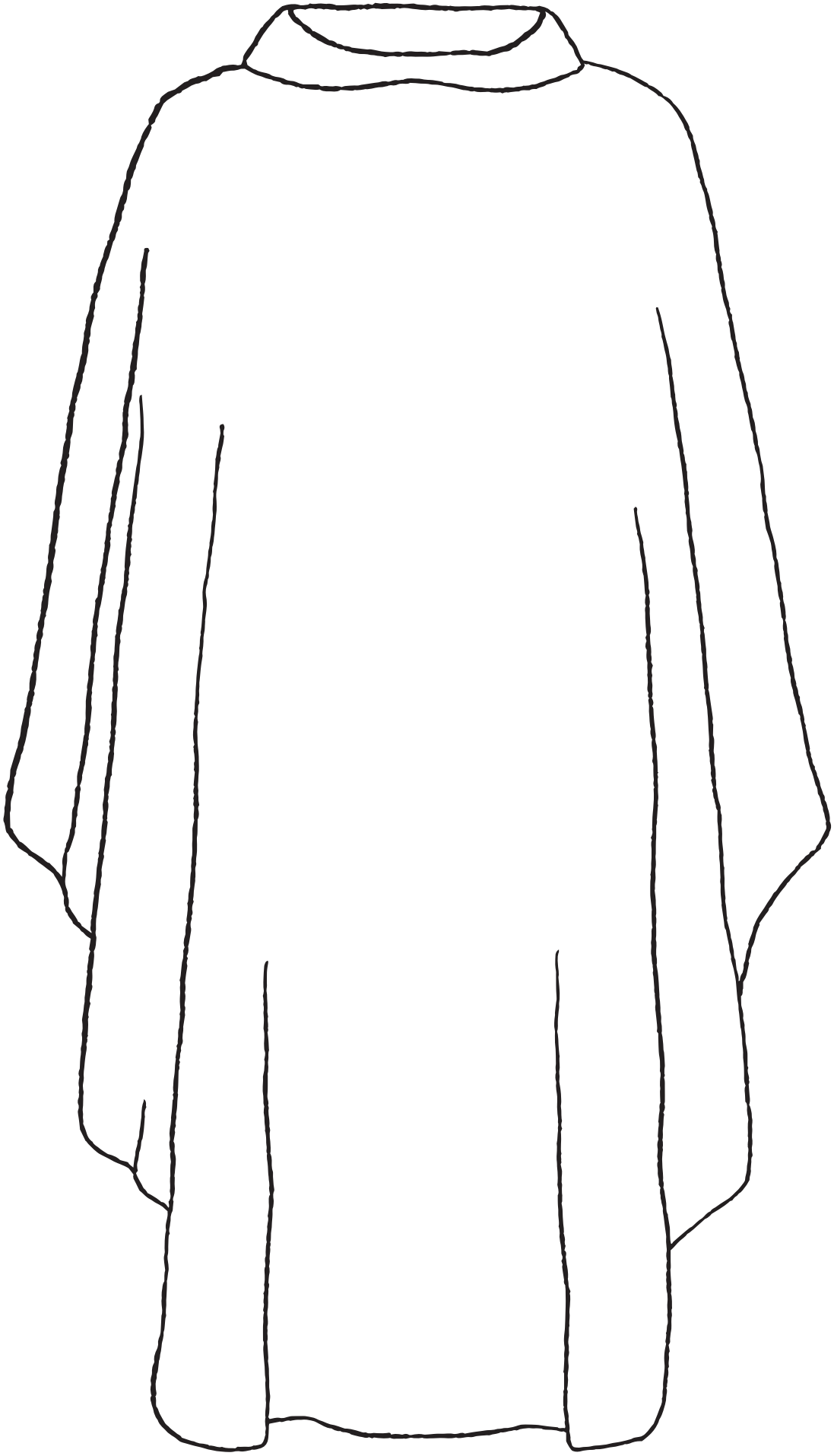
Can you create a chasuble for your priest this Advent? Color your own design and then give this picture to your priest. Thank him for helping you pray during Advent as we all prepare to celebrate the Birth of Jesus at Christmas!

COLORS: Advent chasubles should be purple, unless it is worn on Gaudete Sunday and then it can be rose (pink)!

SYMBOLS: some ideas to decorate your chasuble are candles, an Advent wreath, stars, an angel, Alpha & Omega, greenery like holly and pine, Marian symbols or Jesse Tree symbols



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The Holy Eucharist is the continuation of Christ's incarnation on earth. The mystery of the Eucharist gives us the joy of having Christmas every day. When we come to the Blessed Sacrament we come to Bethlehem, a name which means "house of bread." Jesus chose to be born in Bethlehem because He would dwell with us forever as the "Living Bread" come down from heaven. When the shepherds and Magi came to adore Him, they brought Him so much joy with their humble visit to Bethlehem that their visit has been praised and retold down through the centuries. God has never stopped honoring them for honoring His Son in Bethlehem. So too, your humble visit to Jesus today in the Blessed Sacrament brings Him so much joy that it will be retold for all eternity and bring the world closer to His promise of peace on earth.

- St. Teresa of Calcutta



