

St. Agnes
Faith Formation Program
Confirmation Lesson Plans

Advent/Christmas Lesson

Objectives:

To help the students:

- Prayerfully welcome the Newborn King during this Advent and Christmas season

Materials Needed:

- Bibles
- Writing utensils
- Copies of opening and closing prayers, 1 per student
- Materials in all 6 activity centers

Introduction (5 minutes):

- Take attendance
 - Make sure you leave the sheet out by 7:30 P.M. for the hall monitors to pick up.
- Prayer
 - Participate in an Advent prayer service in the church with the students so please bring them over immediately after you take attendance.

Content (35 minutes):

- Get the students to share stories (either from personal experience or ones they've heard) that demonstrate the "reason for the season." Help them focus on the true meaning of Christmas – a season of giving and caring for one another that is a reflection on God the Father's giving the gift of the Son and his caring for us.
- Let them know that tonight they will have the opportunity to prayerfully reflect on the Christmas story and consider their place within God's mission.
- All 6 centers will be set up on tables in and around the Cafeteria & Social Hall tonight. Ask your group to limit 4-5 people per center at a time. There will be some quiet instrumental music playing and the lights will be dimmed. Encourage your group to experience the prayer centers in silence with no talking – simply to read the instructions provided and then complete the activity at each station. They do not have to be completed in order 1-6; they can mix them up. When they are finished, they need to come back to their classroom space for some processing.
 - **Center #1: The Nativity** – A typical Nativity set with figurines from the Christmas narrative will be placed on a table. Written instructions invite the youth to think about which character from the story they identify with most at this point in their lives: the expectant mom, the worried father, the scruffy shepherd, the travelling

magi, the angels coming to bring good news, the animals wondering at the spectacle happening in their stable? Blue and pink paper doll cutouts will be provided and youth are encouraged to write their name on one of the dolls and place it in the nativity scene as a way of symbolically entering the mystery of this story for the rest of the Advent season.

- **Center #2: Naming Distractions** - For this center, the youth will find a box wrapped like a gift with a slot in the top. Pens and small slips of paper will be provided. The youth are invited to write or draw those distractions in their lives right now that are keeping them from focusing on their faith. These distractions might include worries, stress related to school or family, relationship issues, or the everyday things like TV, video games, and the like. They should place their lists of distractions in the box as a gesture of letting go of some of those distractions during Advent so that they can focus on God.
- **Center #3: Paper Chain Prayers** – The youth will find strips of green and red construction paper, markers and a stapler and Scotch tape at this center. The youth should use the strips to write down the names of people, places, or causes they would like to lift up in prayer. Then they should use the stapler or tape to connect their strips as loops to the paper chain as a way of connecting their prayers together with those of the rest of the community.
- **Center #4: Shepherd** – This center will have a shepherd figurine or perhaps a toy lamb and a Bible opened to the story in Luke of the angels appearing to the shepherds. The youth will be reminded of the line in the 23rd Psalm that reads "The Lord is my shepherd" and the many times Jesus is described as a shepherd to his flock. They will be asked to reflect on the following: *As we prepare again for the birth of the shepherd who comes to lead us closer to God, consider who the shepherds are in your life. Who has helped you know and experience God's love and compassion?* Deborah will provide a large sheet of paper and markers where youth can write down names as a prayer of thanks for these individuals.
- **Center #5: Waiting** - Using sticky pad notes and a large sheet of paper on a wall, the youth can write and post their answers to the question: "*What are you waiting for this Advent Season?*" They will find another sheet of paper next to that with the related question to answer: "*What do you think God is waiting for this Advent season?*"
- **Center #6: Letters to God** – Looseleaf paper and pens will be set next to an image of Santa and a cross. The youth are invited to think back to the time when they were younger and wrote letters to Santa. What did they ask for? Next, they will be asked to write a letter to God, sharing their hopes and fears, their joys and their sorrows. Then they can seal the letters in an envelope and place them at the foot of the cross.
- When the students have completed all 6 activity centers, bring them back together and get a discussion going to process this experience. What did they get out of it? How does it help refocus their Advent journey? What would they tell others about it?

Service Project:

Bring the youth into the kitchen to help make cookies and treats for the homebound of the parish. We'll make sugar cookies and pretzels w/ Hershey kisses & M&M's.

Closing (5 minutes):

- Be sure the students put their materials in their folders. They SHOULD NOT be throwing everything away at the end of the night
- Pass out any handouts the students need to take home with them this week.
- Prayer
 - Example: Begin with the Sign of the Cross. Then recite the "Prayer for Christmas" together as a class to end tonight's lesson. Then end with the Sign of the Cross.

