

# MANGER OF THE HEART

*Advent Celebration from Disciple of Christ, Education in Virtue*

**Students prepare a manger for baby Jesus by placing a piece of straw in it each time they practice an Advent virtue.**

**Aim:** To focus students on preparing their hearts, through their practice of virtue, to receive Jesus at Christmas.

**Materials:**

- Straw (or brown or yellow construction paper strips for straw)
- Manger, crib, or nice box to serve as a manger
- Optional: Baby doll, swaddled

In the season of Advent, we join with Mary in preparing the manger of our hearts to receive the Christ Child. By actively practicing the virtues, we seek to adopt the attitude of expectancy that Mary and the Chosen People of Israel had, as they waited in joyful hope for the coming of the Messiah. In imitation of her receptivity to God's grace and the transforming power of His presence, we seek an openness to the Holy Spirit's action in bringing to perfection our fallen human nature.

While looking forward to Jesus' coming, we can also prepare for Him. Each time we deliberately practice virtue, we make our hearts more welcoming to Him, like placing straw in the manger.

**Directions:**

- Discuss with the students how Advent is a time to get ready for Jesus.
- Introduce the manger as a way to get ready for Jesus: The real getting ready happens in each of our hearts, but the "sign" of the manger can help us get ready.
- Tell the students that as a class, you will get ready for Jesus by practicing virtue. You may wish to have them focus on specific "Advent virtues" on the attached list, or even focus on one of these virtues each week.
- Give the students directions on when they can put their straw in the manger.
- *Optional:* Begin your class Christmas party (or your return after break) by placing Baby Jesus in the manger.
  - Read Luke 2:4-14
  - Sing a couple of Christmas hymns: "O Come All Ye Faithful", "Joy to the World", "What Child is This", "Hark the Herald Angels Sing", etc.



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# Advent Virtues



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VIRTUE	KNOWING THE VIRTUE	LIVING THE VIRTUE	SCRIPTURE CONNECTION
<b>Prayerfulness</b>	Being still, listening, and being willing to talk to God as a friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making personal visits to the Blessed Sacrament</li> <li>• Taking initiative to pray</li> <li>• Practicing recollection</li> </ul>	“Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” <i>(Luke 2:19)</i>
<b>Humility</b>	Awareness that all our gifts come from God and appreciation of the gifts of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledging the talents of others by praising them</li> <li>• Saying “thank you” when praised for an action well done</li> </ul>	“And Mary said, ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.’” <i>(Luke 1:46)</i>
<b>Obedience</b>	Assenting to rightful authority without hesitation or resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honoring your teachers and parents by doing what they ask</li> <li>• Anticipating their requests and wants</li> <li>• Smiling while doing a task you should do</li> </ul>	“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.” <i>(Matthew 1:24)</i>
<b>Generosity</b>	Giving of oneself in a willing and cheerful manner for the good of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingly helping others</li> <li>• Freely giving of your time and gifts</li> </ul>	“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...” <i>(John 3:16)</i>
<b>Gratitude</b>	Thankful disposition of mind and heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressing thanks by words or deeds and in your prayers</li> </ul>	“The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” <i>(Luke 1:49)</i>
<b>Patience</b>	Bearing present difficulties calmly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiting for your turn</li> <li>• Listening while others are speaking</li> <li>• Remaining calm when you don’t get what you want</li> </ul>	“...And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem...” <i>(Luke 2:1–7)</i>
<b>Docility</b>	Willingness to be taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness to listen to directions</li> <li>• Listening to and thinking about another person’s idea</li> </ul>	“When the angels went away to heaven the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem...” <i>(Luke 2:15)</i>

# ADVENT WREATH

*Advent Idea from Disciple of Christ, Education in Virtue*

**The class makes a wreath and uses it daily for prayer and Scripture readings.**

**Aim:** To learn the symbolism behind the wreath and use it for prayer time in the classroom.

## **Materials:**

- A wreath of greenery with 3 purple candles and one pink. (Can't find purple and pink candles? Use large purple and pink bows on white candles instead.)
- One extra set of pink and purple candles (depending on the kind you get, you might need more...)
- One set of 4 white candles, and a large, white pillar candle.

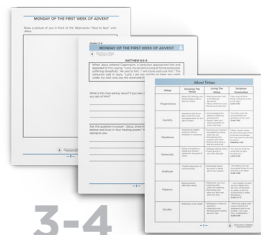
## **Directions:**

- Explain the symbolism of the Advent wreath to students.
  - green branches: God promises everlasting life
  - circle: God's love has no beginning and no end
  - purple candles: penance (and royalty)
  - pink candle: joy (the color of the breaking dawn: salvation is coming!)
- Light the wreath daily and lower classroom lights during your time of daily prayer or journaling.

*Help create space for students to encounter God in His Word. Our Advent lectio divina journals are great for daily prayer in the classroom.*



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