

# Faith Loops

Faith Loops are PowerPoint presentations with images and information that will help us grow in the understanding of our Catholic faith. They will be projected on the screens during the twenty minutes prior to each weekend mass.

During that time, the slides will loop, or repeat, themselves. Thus, the name: Faith Loops.



# The Season of Advent

The word *Advent* means ‘coming’.

Beginning four Sundays before Christmas Day and ending on Christmas Eve, Advent is a four-week period of preparation and repentance (turning away from sin and towards God).

Purple (or violet) is the liturgical color of Advent. The altar cloth and chasuble (cloak) that our priests and deacons wear are purple. It is the color of penitence (sorrow for sins) and royalty (A King is born!).

# The Season of Advent



During Advent, we remember Mary's expectation for the birth of Jesus. We also recall the birth of John the the Baptist who, thirty years later, would preach about Jesus' coming.

Birth of John the Baptist, 1526, Jacopo Pontormo

# The Advent Wreath

**Q. Why is the Advent wreath round?**

A. The wreath is round because it reminds us that God's love for us is without end. There is no beginning or end to God and his love for us.



# The Advent Wreath

**Q. Why do we use evergreen branches to make the wreath?**

A. These branches remain always fresh and green, even during the long winter. Green is the color of hope. The green branches remind us that, even during the dark times of our lives, God is with us. His love is everlasting.



# The Advent Wreath

**Q. Why do we use four candles?**

**A.** The candles remind us of the One for whom we are waiting: Jesus, the Light of the World.

There are four candles, one for each of the four Sundays of Advent.



# The Advent Wreath

**Q. Why do we have three purple (violet) candles and one pink (rose) candle?**

A. Purple – or violet – is the color of kings. It is a serious color, reminding us that preparing to welcome Jesus into our lives is serious work. During Advent, we ask God for the grace to turn away from sin and turn back to God.

Pink or rose, however, is the color of joy. On the 3rd Sunday of Advent, we are halfway to Christmas and already anticipating the joy of Christmas.

# The Advent Wreath

**Q. Which candles do we light first?**

**A.** In the first week of Advent we light one violet candle. In the second week, we light two violet candles. In the third week, we light the same two violet candles and the rose one, in anticipation of the great joy we will have at Christmas. From the fourth Sunday of Advent until Christmas Eve, all four candles are lit, and the Advent wreath lights up the darkness. We know that the Nativity of Jesus is very near.



# The Advent Wreath

**Q. What should we do when we light the Advent candles?**

**A.** We are reminded to think of Jesus, pray to Him, sing songs about Him, and listen to Him speaking to us in Scripture.



# Learning About the Liturgy

Every sacrament invites us into a grace-filled encounter with Jesus Christ. The celebration of the Eucharist is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. So how do we encounter Him at Mass?

There are four ways:

- In the Word of God (the Sacred Scriptures)
- In the Body of Christ (Holy Communion)
- In the ordained minister (bishop, priest, or deacon)
- In each other ... Yes, God dwells in each of us.



**“The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic his giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves.”**

St. Nicholas  
Feast day: December 6

# Saint of the Week

## St. Barbara

The story of St. Barbara is a fascinating one. She was a beautiful maiden who lived 1700 years ago, during the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Barbara's father wanted her to marry, and many young men asked for her hand in marriage, but she refused every time. For her disobedience, her father imprisoned Barbara in a tower to keep her under control. (It sounds a bit like the Grimm Brothers' story of Rapunzel.)



# Saint of the Week

## St. Barbara

Within the tower, Barbara was taught by philosophers and poets. She learned about Christ and became a Christian, devoting much of her time to prayer and to studying the faith.

One account reported that, just before leaving on a journey, her father ordered a bathhouse to be constructed for Barbara. In his absence, Barbara had three windows built (instead of two) ... one for each person in the Holy Trinity. Upon his return, she professed to her father that she was a Christian.

# Saint of the Week

## St. Barbara

This made her father, who was a pagan, so angry that he wanted to kill her. Barbara escaped, but her father caught her. She was tortured repeatedly, but her wounds miraculously healed each morning. Eventually, Barbara was beheaded by her own father. He was immediately struck by lightning and consumed by, what some people say was, fire from heaven.



# Saint of the Week

## St. Barbara

The feast of St. Barbara is celebrated every year on December 4. She is the patron saint of construction workers, mathematicians, and firefighters.



Saint Barbara is often depicted with a chalice and a tower with three windows, as is the case in this Russian icon of the saint.

# Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke include an ‘Infancy Narrative’; from these we learn the story of Christ’s birth. Christian Tradition has introduced additional details.

Test your knowledge. What’s true, and what’s not?

**Jesus was born in a house in Bethlehem.**

True or false?



# Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

**Jesus was born  
in a house in Bethlehem.**

Not known.

The wise men found the  
holy family in a house in  
Bethlehem (Matt. 2: 11).



# Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

**Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem.**

True or false?

# Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

**Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem.**

Not known.

Jesus was placed in a manger, which could have been located in a cave, a stable, or a home (Luke 2:7).



# Test Your Knowledge

**During Advent we sing the song, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” at Mass. What does Emmanuel mean?**

- a. Baby Jesus
- b. Messiah
- c. Savior of the World
- d. God With Us

# Answer

## d. God With Us

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (n. 744) teaches: “... [T]he Holy Spirit completes in Mary all the preparations for Christ’s coming among the People of God. By the action of the Holy Spirit in her, the Father gives the world Emmanuel, ‘God-with-us’”.



# Test Your Knowledge

**New Year's Day is the beginning of the calendar year. When does the new liturgical year begin?**

- a. Christmas
- b. First Sunday of Advent
- c. Easter
- d. Ash Wednesday

# Answer

## b. First Sunday of Advent

The Western Church's liturgical year has begun with Advent since the tenth century. The year ends with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.



# Test Your Knowledge

**Advent is a penitential season.**

True

False





# Answer

**False**

Although Advent is a time to repent and prepare spiritually for the (second) coming of Christ and the final judgment, Canon Law states, “The penitential days and times in the universal Church are every Friday of the whole year and the season of **Lent**” (n. 1250).

# Did you know ...?

Each of the Advent candles is associated with a theme or virtue. There are different 'combinations' of these, but perhaps the most common designations are as follows:

- First Week of Advent: HOPE
- Second Week of Advent: FAITH
- Third Week of Advent: JOY
- Fourth Week of Advent: PEACE

Officially, only the third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday, has a prescribed theme, and it is JOY. (Gaudete is a Latin word meaning 'rejoice'.)

# Prayer Before Mass

Dear God, help me to be open to all that you want to give me at Mass today.

My heart is open.

I come empty and unsure and troubled.

I come in hope.

I come in need to be loved by you,  
united with this faith community,  
strengthened by your word,  
and nourished by the Bread of Life.

Cleanse me. Refresh me.

Strengthen me for the journey ahead.

Lead me to heaven.

Thank you, God, for this time together.

Thank you, God, for everything. Amen.



# Questions???

Do you have a question about the Catholic faith or about the celebration of the Mass? If so, write it on a piece of paper and drop it into the marked shoebox on the table at the back of the church.

We will try to answer it in a Faith Loop at a later date.

Thank you.

