



School and Religious Education Program Invitation

Lesson Plan

High School

Preparation

So that you have a better understanding of the need for and purpose of this lesson, read Archbishop Perez's pastoral letter regarding the *Nothing Compares to Being There Initiative*. Share it with other members of the faculty and the students. It can be found at <https://archphila.org/nothingcompares/> Explore the additional information and links found on the web site. At this level, students are a bit more independent and able to understand the importance of the *Nothing Compares to Being There Initiative*

Objectives

- The students will realize that the season of Advent and the conclusion of the Year of St. Joseph is a good time for them to focus on the importance of being an active participant in the Eucharistic Liturgy.
- The students will participate in the Liturgical prayer as the official public worship of the Church.
- The students will gain a deeper understanding of why regular participation in the Eucharistic Celebration is important to grow a stronger life of faith.
- Students will understand the need to pray as a member of a faith community.

Activities

1. Explain to the students that we are now in the season of Advent, and the Church is inviting us to return to active participation in the Mass and the liturgical life of the Church. Show them the video of Archbishop Perez inviting all to come back to a fuller participation in the Eucharist and the Sacraments.
<https://catholicphilly.com/2021/11/video/rediscover-jesus-in-person-at-mass-says-archbishop/>

2. Read the reflection found at the end of this plan to the students. Offer the following for further reflection.

Today, pay attention to the stories you hear, watch or read. Where is God at work in these stories? How might these stories be preparing you to encounter Jesus anew at Christmas? What would be the greatest way you could prepare to encounter Jesus?

3. Remind the students that, while the season of Advent focuses on the coming of Jesus to us at Christmas, it is also a time to prepare for the inward coming of Christ into our hearts through participation in the Liturgical prayer of the Church. Spend some time reviewing the following:
 - Liturgy of the Hours
 - The Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
 - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
 - Forty Hours
4. During the season of Advent take the students to the school chapel. If the school minister is available, spend some time in quiet adoration or Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.
5. Pray the Liturgy of the Hours with the students. An audio version can be found at <https://divineoffice.org/adv-w01-sun-mp/?date=20211128>
6. **Remind the students each week to attend Mass on Sunday.**



Advent Reflection

Walking into a Catholic church is an experience of storytelling – the stories of our faith are literally embedded in the walls.

The Stations of the Cross tell the story of Jesus' long walk to Calvary. The stained-glass windows share tales of saints from the past. Images of the Blessed Mother invite us into her ongoing story, reminding us that she is our mother, too. And the crucifix hung at the center – well, that tells the story of death and resurrection, the pivotal moment of our faith.

Think of your parish community, your own church or just a sacred space that has held some meaning for you. Picture it in your mind. What stories do you see? Do you see yourself in those stories? Do you feel God's desire to tend to your story, to invite you into the great story of creation?

These last many months of praying-by-couch have made one thing clear: We don't always have to pass through great wooden doors to be in Church. Church can be a lot of places, a lot of people.

And those stories embedded in the walls – how does that work when the walls are not quite so piously decorated? When they're instead adorned with photos of our kids and grandparents, posters from favorite films and paintings of far-off places?

God speaks to us through them, too, inviting us deeper into God's great story.

And that is our challenge – our pilgrimage – this Advent season. Are we attuned to seeing these same holy invitations in stories and images that come to us from Netflix and the local comic bookstore, from Spotify and the latest on the bestseller list? Are we available to God's whispering Spirit, inviting us to hear God beckoning us forward in and through all things?

If the Incarnation is about God breaking into our story in a new, surprising way, then encountering God in unexpected stories is a perfect point of reflection for our Advent journey.

As we pray through these next four weeks, let us commit ourselves to making this pilgrimage, this journey deeper into the stories of our time, to encounter the great Storyteller, the one who labors still in devising the great story of creation.

Ultimately, that's where our Advent pilgrimage is headed: We journey to the manger, to stand in the cold and the dark and welcome Jesus anew into our story, God's ongoing story of love, mercy and peace