

Learning Centers for
Advent and Lent

LEARNING
CENTERS *for*

Advent
and Lent

Doris Murphy



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Introduction

Learning centers are one means for helping parents and other adults get involved in the religious formation of children in non-intimidating and practical ways. Many parents are eager to learn more about their own faith and want to hand that faith on to their children, but they don't feel they have adequate training or enough information to do so. Yet parents share their faith best through example, family rituals, and conversations. Learning centers can help them extend this process. This practical method of faith sharing can be used with almost any doctrinal content when presented in an age-appropriate manner with sensitivity to various learning styles.

So here parents are provided the opportunity to complete hands-on tasks, have discussions/conversations about their faith with their children, and reinforce material that is addressed in their children's textbooks.

Learning centers offer creative and interactive ways to do this. Plus they are flexible. Parents can choose a convenient time to visit the center with their children and work at their own pace. It usually takes about two hours to thoughtfully visit the sessions and complete the activities. Learning centers also give the director of faith formation an opportunity to observe parents, children, and other adults working together. This can help him or her determine which learning centers are most beneficial in the learning process.

A few practical points:

- If possible, before families visit the individual learning centers, review briefly with them the sheet of directions they will find at each center, which list the church teaching, the goal of the activity, and directions.
- Make copies of the short suggested readings from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and have them at the appropriate centers so those who wish can read them.
- Make certain that each center has all the supplies needed and enough of each supply.
- At each center have a Bible with a marker on the page where the appropriate passage for that center can be easily found. (You might want to use a child's version of the Bible for these readings.)

Special thanks to Carol Mercord, Religious Education Director at St. Joseph Parish in Prescott, Wisconsin, who continues to give her support, help, and advice in developing these centers.

Also thanks to Diane Wengelski at St. Bridget's Parish for her suggestions about how to use the learning centers.

And special thanks to my nephew Nathan for his computer savvy.

Learning Centers for
Advent

The Jesse Tree

Church Teaching

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 64, 712

Goals

- To prepare with hope for the coming of Jesus
- To understand that the Jesse Tree is the family tree of Jesus
- To learn about the ancestors of Jesus
- To appreciate your own family tree and your own relatives

Supplies

- Bible
- Envelope with slips of names for Jesse Tree symbols
- Sheet for your own family tree
- Glue, colored paper, scissors, pencils, crayons, art materials
- Pieces of yarn; paper punch
- A tree branch or small Christmas tree

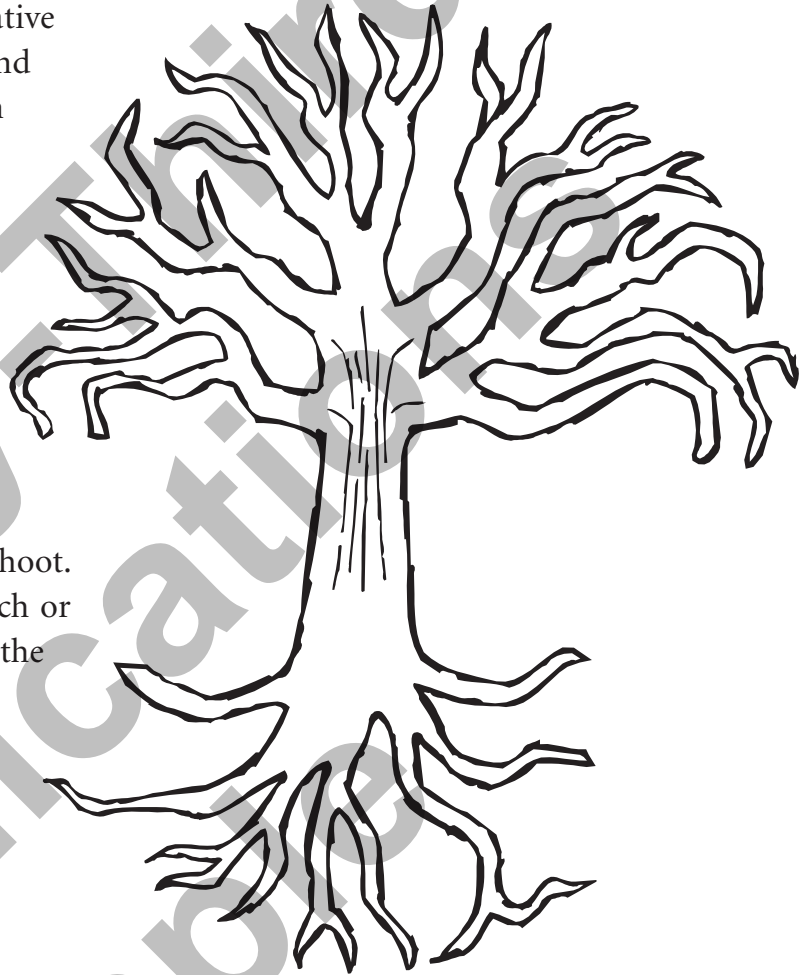
Directions for Activities

- Read Matthew 1:1–17, Jeremiah 33:15, Acts of the Apostles 13:22–23.
- Talk about your own family tree. Write the names of your ancestors on the paper provided.
- Discuss the meaning of the Jesse Tree.

The Jesse Tree

Our ancestors, the people in our family tree, are often unique and interesting. The people who make up our “faith family,” ones who show us how we are related to Jesus, are also unique and interesting. For example, the Bible tells us that Jesus was the relative of David, Israel’s greatest king, and he was also related to Abraham, an early leader of the Hebrew people. Through these and many other faithful people, God took flesh as Jesus and lived among us.

The Jesse Tree is Jesus’ family tree. Jesse was the father of King David, and Isaiah wrote that a shoot (a branch) would come forth from the root of Jesse, meaning that Jesus would be this shoot. A Jesse Tree, made with a bare branch or small tree, holds symbols of some of the people from the Old Testament who waited and prepared for Jesus. It is an Advent custom to think about and pray to Jesus’ ancestors.



- Draw one strip from the envelope. Make the symbol of that person as suggested. Use some of the art materials.
- When finished, put a piece of string on the symbol and hang it on the tree.
- Take a list of the Jesse Tree names home with you. Make a different symbol for each day of Advent and hang it on a tree (branch) at home as you wait for Christmas. Read the assigned Scripture story for each symbol as well.

Note to Facilitator: When all have completed their symbols, place the tree where all can enjoy it during the Advent season.

Symbols for the Jesse Tree

Adam and Eve	tree of good and evil fruit (apple)	Genesis 3:1–24 Genesis 3:1–24
Noah	ark, boat rainbow animals	Genesis 6:13–17 Genesis 9:8–17 Genesis 6:17–22; 7:1–4
Abraham and Sarah	tent	Genesis 12:8–9
Abraham	stars	Genesis 15:5–7
Isaac	ram	Genesis 22:1–14
Rebecca	a well	Genesis 24:12–21
Jacob	ladder	Genesis 28:10–17
Rachel and Leah	baskets	Genesis 29:15–30
Joseph	coat of colors	Genesis 37:1–4
Moses	burning bush Ten Commandments	Exodus 3:1–15 Exodus 20:1–21
Rahab	red rope	Joshua 2:1–21
Deborah	palm tree	Judges 4:4–7
Gideon	torch	Judges 7:16–18
Sampson	jawbone	Judges 15:14–17
Ruth	stalk of wheat	Ruth, Chapters 1–4
Samuel	oil	1 Samuel 16:1–13
David	stringed harp slingshot	1 Samuel 16:14–23 1 Samuel 17:42–58
Solomon	crown temple	1 Kings 3:4–14 1 Kings 6:4–14
Elijah	chariot	2 Kings 2:9–14
Jonah	whale	Jonah 2:1–10
Isaiah	root/branch	Isaiah 11:1–9
Ezekiel	bones	Ezekiel 37:1–14
Daniel	lion	Daniel 6:10–23
Elizabeth	home	Luke 1:39–45
John the Baptist	shell and water	Matthew 3:4–12
Joseph	hammer and saw	Matthew 1:19–21
Mary	manger	Luke 2:1–14

Our Family Tree

Who is in your family now? Who is the oldest person you know about who is related to you? Why does it matter to know your relatives? How would you feel if you found out that one of your relatives was a king or a queen? Is it important that your relatives would be people of justice? What does that mean?

These are the people in my family:

My Name _____

Other People in My Family:

The O Antiphons

Church Teaching

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 452, 2648

Goals

- To know the importance and meaning of the O Antiphons
- To learn the many different names used for Jesus (especially “God with us”)
- To celebrate Advent in our homes with special prayers

Supplies

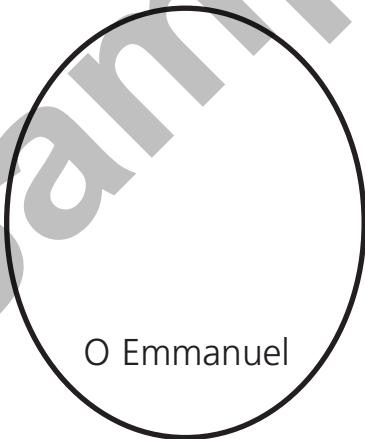
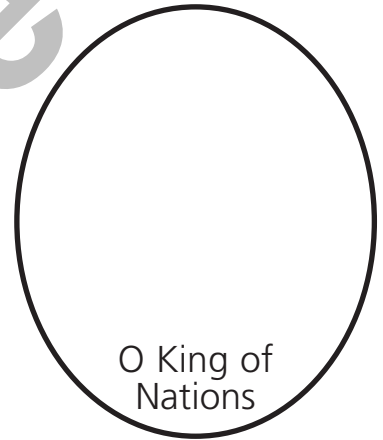
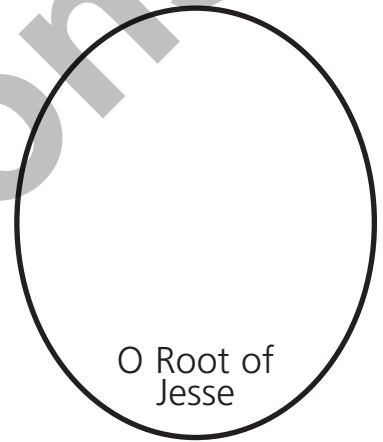
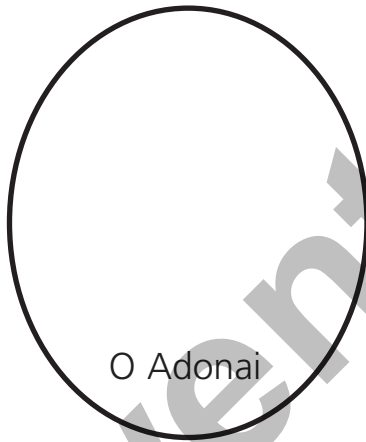
- Bible
- Copy of the song “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”
- Sheet of circles for the O Antiphons
- Pencils, crayons, markers
- Prayer sheet

Directions for Activities

- Read Isaiah 9:6 and Matthew 1:22–23.
- Explain the meaning of the O Antiphons: Antiphons are short prayers that are prayed when people come together for evening prayer (also called vespers). Seven days before Christmas, the O Antiphons are sung. Each begins with the word “O,” followed by a different name for Jesus.
- Take the sheet with seven circles and prayers on the other side. Each of these is an “O.” Draw a picture inside the “O” that shows a symbol of the Jesus-name.
 1. O Wisdom—an eye
 2. O Adonai—hand
 3. O Root of Jesse—tree root
 4. O Key of David—key
 5. O Rising Dawn—rising sun
 6. O King of Nations—crown
 7. O Emmanuel, God-with-us—crib/manger

The O Antiphons

Pray an O Antiphon each evening from December 18 to December 24. Let each remind you to open your heart to Jesus as you prepare for Christmas.



○
Adonai,
leader of
Israel, come to
save us with an
outstretched
hand

○ Wisdom,
come and teach
us the way of
the Lord

○ Root of
Jesse, come
to save us and
don't delay

○ Key of
David, come
open the way
and lead us out
of darkness

○ Rising Dawn,
come to bring
us light

○ King
of Nations,
come and save
us whom you
made out of
dust

○
Emmanuel,
God-with-us,
come and save
us, O Lord,
our God