

WAIT FOR IT

A Life Night on Advent

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

GOAL FOR THE LIFE NIGHT

Help teens understand the purpose of Advent and what Christ is calling them to as they prepare for Christmas. This night will give them practical, concrete ways to pray the four weeks of Advent.

LIFE NIGHT AT A GLANCE

This night is a great way to introduce the season of Advent and help teens prepare for the coming of Christ. The first half of the night is spent celebrating the new liturgical year by having a New Year's party. The party should get the teens excited and wound up. The excitement and anticipation should be built up and culminate into the ball drop where the "power goes out" before reaching the New Year. This excitement and anticipation sets up the teaching on what the season of Advent is and how we enter into the anticipation of both the first and second coming of Christ. In small groups, teens will be able to make New Year's resolutions by finding four concrete ways they can pray and prepare for Christ's coming. They will receive an Advent wreath they can place somewhere they can see it everyday. The Life Night will end by using Scripture to reflect on how God's promises to us are fulfilled in Christ.

ADVERTISEMENT

Invite teens to the party by creating an invitation to pass out to the teens before Mass giving them all the details - time, location, name of band playing, free food, etc. Have the Core members pass out the invitations to all teens as they enter the Church for Mass.

ENVIRONMENT

What better way to celebrate the new liturgical year than by throwing a New Year's party? The room should be set up for a party. The walls should be decked out with purple and pink streamers, Christmas lights should be strung across the room, games should be available for teens to play, and food for snacking while they socialize. If possible, have a band playing music. There should also be a typical New Year's scene with a makeshift ball drop and a booth for commentators set up at the front of the room. This will be used in the Gather.

GATHER *25 Minutes*

PARTY (20 min)

Allow the teens to socialize, eat and play games. Have classic games like Monopoly, Connect Four, Chutes and Ladders, Apples to Apples, and decks of cards available as well as video games such as Dance, Dance, Revolution (DDR). Have a band playing music and a dance floor where teens can dance. During all of this the Core members should walk around and yelling "Happy New Year" and asking teens what their New Year's resolutions are.

COUNTDOWN (5 min)

After most teens are finished eating, call everyone together for the New Year's countdown. Have two Core members as commentators for the countdown and ball drop, talking about the highlights of the last year and the excitement for the upcoming year. They should also welcome any new teens during the commentary. After the new teens are welcomed, hype up the crowd for the countdown. Have a makeshift ball drop - Core Members on a ladder passing down a big ball and the numbers projected on the screen - that moves for the countdown. Begin the countdown with everyone yelling "10..9..8..7..6..5..4..3..2..1!" At "2" the power should go out and everyone left in the dark, never getting to "Happy New Year!" After the power outage, have all the teens sit down and wait a few moments in darkness.

PROCLAIM *10 minutes*

ADVENT TALK (10 min)

This talk will explain the liturgical season of Advent and the reason we have it. The teaching will focus on how to truly anticipate the coming of Christ as well as explain the tradition and meaning of the Advent wreath.

I. Advent: Season of waiting

- Ask the teens how many of them are frustrated and confused by what just happened
- Tonight we are talking about Advent, our liturgical New Year. The Church celebrates Advent as the beginning of the new liturgical year.

CATECHISM REFERENCES:
CCC 522-524
CCC 1434

SCRIPTURES:
Matthew 26:40-46
Matthew 24:36-44
Romans 13:11-14
Isaiah 9:5-6

Isaiah 11:1-5
Isaiah. 40:3-4
Revelation 5:11-13
Revelation 1:7-8
Philippians 2:7-11

- Advent is a season of waiting and preparation. “Ad” means “to” and “vieso” means “on your way”. So Advent means “on your way to Christ”. Many of us hate waiting. We live in a culture that skips from Halloween to Christmas, without a time of preparation. However, we are called to prepare and wait for the coming of Christ.
- The main call of Advent is to wake up and be read -
Mt 26:40-46, Mt 24:36-44, Rom 13:11-14

2. Themes of Advent

- *Advent looks forward to the threefold coming of Christ:* His historical coming (the Incarnation), His Second Coming at the end of time, and His continual coming in every moment into our lives and hearts (St. Ignatius of Loyola). Advent prepares us for all three comings. (CCC 524)
- *Sights:* During the season of Advent many different things happen in the Church. The colors change from green to purple and rose. The colors are significant. The purple signifies royalty and repentance and the rose signifies joy. These colors help us understand how we should prepare for the coming of Christ.
- *Sounds:* During Advent the theme of the Mass readings changes. We go back through the Old Testament and hear the anticipation for the coming of the Savior. We hear about the Second Coming in Revelation. The whole Church is preparing, anticipating and waiting for the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ.
- *Advent wreath:* The Advent wreath is an old tradition in the Church adopted from Germany. The wreath is symbol of victory. Christ conquered sin and death, and we are victorious in Him. The circle of evergreen symbolizes the endless, timeless nature of God. God never changes, even when we run away or ignore him. The candles symbolize the coming of light as the darkness is conquered. Christ is the light of the world that conquered sin and death.

3. How can we prepare for Christ’s Coming?

- *New Year’s Resolution:* What happens when we approach a new year? What do most people do? Make New Year’s resolutions. We can make a few resolutions for Advent.

Think of some concrete ways to help us better prepare for Christ’s coming not only to the world, but also to our hearts, ways to open our lives to Christ.

- *Prayer and Fasting:* Well, for starters, we can pray. We can ask the Lord to help us prepare a place for him. Ask him to show us the areas in our lives where we haven’t welcomed him in yet, maybe in our families or a certain friendship. We can fast from food, Internet, or TV, to clear the clutter and make room for Christ.
- *Sacraments:* We can go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once during Advent. By asking Jesus to forgive our sins, we can get rid of what’s blocking our lives from being the Lord’s
- *Scripture:* We can read and pray the Scriptures we hear at Mass. Scripture is a wonderful tool for us, especially during Advent. The whole of the Old Testament points to and is fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ.

BREAK 25 minutes

PERSONAL ADVENT WREATH (10 min)

Break the teens into small groups of 5-7. Once they are in their groups, pass out to each teen a simple, small Advent wreath, four small pieces of paper and a pen. On each piece of paper, ask the teens to write a resolution for each week of Advent that will help them enter more fully into the coming of Christ. The resolutions can be in any area - (spiritually, within your family, at school, socially). For example, the teens could spend time that week praying with their family instead going out with friends. The teens can help put up Christmas decorations, make Christmas cookies, or read the readings for Mass everyday before school starts with their friends. Once they have written their resolutions, have them attach the resolutions to the four candles of their wreath.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (15 min)

Ask each teen to share their resolutions and why they chose them. Spend some time talking about ways that they can keep their resolutions and truly prepare for Christ during Advent. End the small group by encouraging the teens to place the wreaths somewhere they will see it everyday and to hold each other accountable to their resolutions.

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SEND *15 Minutes*

WRAP (5 min)

Gather all the teens back together and give a short summary of the night. Remind the teens that although it is important for us to make resolutions and promises to God, Advent is about God keeping His promises to us. We are reminded once again that God is faithful and we can trust Him. This idea will be the transition into the prayer for the Life Night.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS (10 min)

In a prayerful atmosphere, have six teens read the following passages about God's promise of the Incarnation and Second Coming. Between each verse have the music minister play the chorus from a song (Matt Maher's "Behold the Lamb of God" is a great option).

- Isaiah 9:5-6
- Isaiah 11:1-5
- Isaiah 40:3-4
- Revelation 5:11-13
- Revelation 1:7-8
- Philippians 2:7-11

The youth minister will close in prayer for the teens and ask the intercession of Mary, whom we look to as a perfect example of the anticipation for the coming of Jesus Christ. Close with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

- Have some of the parents help make the Advent wreaths for the teens.
- Invite the Life Teen band from the parish to play at Life Night

MAKING IT WORK

- If Advent wreaths are not possible, create a wallet size card where teens can write their resolutions. You can also include the parish Reconciliation times as well.
- For the Send of this night, it might be a good idea to move to the Church sanctuary. There you can set the tone with candles and soft worship music.