

Focus: Preparing for Jesus

Materials:

- Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
- Advent wreath and flames
- CD: Advent CD Cycle B
- Bible: Children's Bible Storybook
- Booklet: The Little Apple
- Book: Mary's Prayer

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about being the light of Jesus in the world. This week we will talk about God sending a special messenger with a special message for us.

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.

Let us pray.

Dear Jesus, As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, open our eyes to your presence all around us. Help us to celebrate your birth by showing love to others.

Today is the 4th and last week of Advent. Next week we will celebrate Jesus' birth—Christmas. As we light the last candle, the candle of Love, let us remember that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to show us his love.

Prayer: Loving God, we thank You for Your gift of love - shown to us perfectly in Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us to prepare our hearts to receive His love. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.

Song/Movement

Hope, Peace Joy and Love, track: 1, from Advent Cycle B

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc.

Chorus:
I got your hope peace joy and
love
The best gifts come from above
I got your hope peace joy and
love in my heart
(Repeat)

Hope is a light in the darkness,
shining brightly on Bethlehem town
The Messiah is born; he's our
king and our lord; the promise of
love we have found
Glory to god in the highest;
peace on earth and good will to all
men

Take the star in the east to the
prince of peace who will someday
be coming again.

Repeat chorus 2x

An angel appeared from the
heavens, bringing news to the
shepherds that night.

Good tidings of joy, in the birth
of a boy, born to give us forgiveness
and life.

Jesus Emmanuel Savior; little
baby the gift from above

He loved us so much he gave his
only son, the gift of hope peace joy
and love.

Repeat Chorus 4x

Memory Verse

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

I am God's servant.

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *In today's Gospel story we will hear about a girl named Mary who would say 'yes' to God. Mary trusted God and knew that God would not ask her to do something that she could not do. So she said, "I am God's servant." She was young and was not planning her life this way, but she trusted God and said she would do as he asked. She wanted to help God carry out his plan for his people.*

Just like Mary, we can say yes to God. When we have to make the right choice, but it is very hard we know that Mary says prayers for us. She had to make a hard choice too. She understands that and sends us love and peace to help us. We do not need to be afraid because God loves us and is always with us.

Gospel Story

Play CD: Track 2-"Stay Awake-Be Ready" from Advent CD

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Luke.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *"Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it."*

Read: The Bible for Children, pp. pp. 213-214, *Gabriel Visits Mary*

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *Why does God send the angel Gabriel to Mary?*
- *What wonderful news does the angel bring?*
- *Why does the angel tell Mary not to be afraid?*
- *What is Mary's final response to the great news?*

Reflection on Reading:

In today's gospel the angel Gabriel brings Mary great news. The angel announces that Mary will bear a son and he will be named Jesus. At first, Mary is confused and frightened by the angel's message. But the angel calms her fears and explains that God is with her.

The writer of today's gospel makes the point that by the power of the Holy Spirit Mary was to bear God's son. This reveals the miraculous nature of the birth of Jesus. Mary's final answer to God's call is yes and she responds, "Let it be done to me according to your word." Mary's faithful response allows God to be born in the person of Jesus.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

Doing What God Asks

Read the Story –*The Little Apple*

Discussion Questions:

- Why was the little apple holding on to the branch so tightly? (He didn't want to fall on the ground)
- Why didn't he want to fall? (He wanted to be picked by a family)
- What did he want his life to be like? (He wanted to be the nicest looking apple in the bowl and be eaten for lunch)
- Then what would happen? (His core would be tossed in the garbage)
- How long would it last? (Only a season)
- What did the old apple tell him? (There is a different life that would last for longer than a season)
- What was a different life he could live? (If he would fall to the ground, even though he didn't want to do it, he could have a life that lasted forever by growing into a tree)
- What is hard for you to do even though you know you should? (answers will vary)
- What should you remember to do when that happens to you? (God loves you, God is with you, Jesus taught us to do the right thing, because of Jesus we will live forever with God if we do the right thing...)

Activity 2:

Prayer of Mary

There is a special prayer just about Mary because she did such a wonderful thing by saying yes to God. We can honor her with this prayer, thanking her for being the Mother of Jesus.

Read the book: *Mary's Prayer*

When you are done-teach the 1st verse of the prayer by having them repeat each line after you.

First Verse:

Hail Mary, full of grace.

The Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women.

Blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus.

Extra Activity-(instead of coloring) Use the Advent Chain to learn names of Jesus—Have volunteers choose a character and then you will read the name and description inside the flap.

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who called Mary to do great things?
Do you believe in Jesus, who completed the promise made by God?
Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us say 'yes' to God like Mary did?*

Sending Forth

*Say: God's love is all around us. We just need to watch carefully to see others doing loving actions.
When you "catch" someone doing a good thing, tell them that they are spreading God's love, just like
Mary did.*

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "Tell Me the Story of Jesus" track 3 from Advent CD Cycle B while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.