



## Ideas for the Home

### *Family Handout*

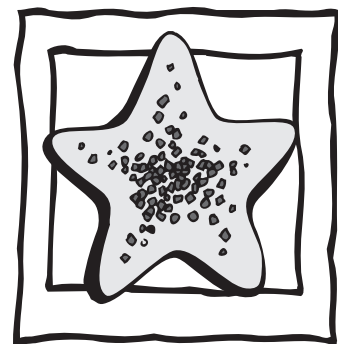
Sharing with others is what makes Advent and Christmas joyous.

Advent, a word meaning “arrival,” was once a period of repentance and preparation for Baptisms that took place on the feast of the Epiphany. It is a season of hope as well as a time to search our hearts in preparation for rededicating our lives to Christ. The readings we hear at daily and Sunday Masses remind us of the great yearning Israel had for the Messiah. We too “wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” Our waiting, though, is active rather than passive. We take action by serving others, spending additional time in prayer, reading Scripture, and participating in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.



**Be a surrogate family.** The Advent and Christmas seasons are full of opportunities for joyous gatherings. For those who cannot be with their families—for example, international students—this time of year can be rather lonely. Is there someone you know who doesn’t have family in the area? Invite him or her to share in your family’s holiday activities.

**Show your appreciation.** This is a great time of year to give attention and thanks to those who care for abused children, the developmentally disabled, the elderly, and others. Caregivers often have very difficult jobs. Bake cookies or other holiday treats and take them to a charity as a surprise. Also show appreciation to someone who makes your life easier every day, such as a kind shopkeeper or a cheerful mail carrier.



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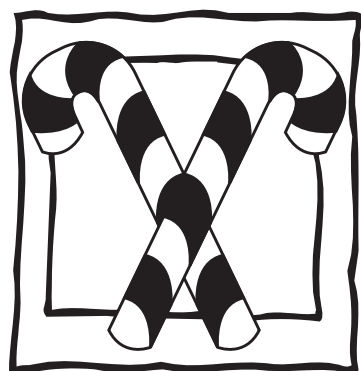


## Ideas for the Home *(continued)*

### *Family Handout*

#### **Understand the symbol of the Christmas tree.**

As you decorate your tree, think about what each decoration means. The tree itself is evergreen, even in winter. This reminds us that Jesus' love for the world will never die or get old; it is eternal. The lights symbolize Christ, the Light of the World. He is there to light even our darkest despair. Is there snow under your tree? God makes every snowflake different just as every person is different. Each person is special to God. The angel ornament is like the angels who visited the shepherds to tell them about Jesus in the manger. The star at the top of the tree is the star that showed the Magi the way to the stable. All the colors on the tree make it beautiful. God made the world beautiful by creating people of all races and cultures. The tree says a lot of things about the season.



#### **Understand the symbol of the candy cane.**

Many years ago a candy maker created a piece of candy that told the story of Jesus' birth, passion, and death. The white stripes stand for Jesus' sinless humanity and purity. The small red stripes stand for his scourging at the pillar on Good Friday. The large red stripe stands for the blood he shed on the cross. The shape is that of the shepherd's crook of the Good Shepherd, and upside down the candy cane is the letter *J* for Jesus.

#### **Use an Advent calendar to celebrate the season with the whole Church.**

An Advent calendar is included in the Take-Home Kit so that you can accompany the worldwide Catholic Church on its journey through Advent. Saints, Scripture readings, and special prayers of the season will join you with God's people, past and present!

