

Advent Workshop

Week Three: Joy



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

The workshop lasts up to 30 minutes. We recommend you deliver all content but please use the slides and script as circumstances allow.

The extension tasks are optional and stand alone so you can choose which ones to use, or use all of them.



This and corresponding Missio Advent workshops, employ scriptural readings from the liturgical season and refer to **one** of our international projects. Every year - thanks to supporters across the world - Missio funds hundreds of Church run projects in areas of poverty, conflict and turmoil.

SLIDE TWO

You may wish to omit the following introductory material about Advent's definition and Advent wreaths.

If so, begin the workshop on slide three.



Explain to students that this workshop is going to help us find out more about the season of Advent.

Question: Ask students if they know what season we have entered?

Answer: Advent.

Question: Ask students if they know what the word 'advent' means?

Answer: The arrival of a notable person or thing, an appearance

In the four weeks leading up to Christmas, we await in hope the arrival of Jesus.

Throughout the season of Advent, the Church uses many symbols to help us understand the significance of God becoming one of us, through the birth of Jesus.

Question: Can you name the most recognisable symbol?

Answer: The Advent wreath.

The Advent wreath is an ancient symbol of the Christian's journey towards Christmas. Every element of the wreath communicates something special about this journey.

Question: What do you think its shape symbolises?

Answer: Its circular shape represents God's eternal loving presence; it has no beginning and no end. The evergreen leaves, which never fade in colour, also signify God's constancy.

Question: What do the candles signify?

Answer: The candles represent hope, peace, joy, love, and the light of Christ, which shatters all darkness.

You can see that three of the candles on the wreath are purple. In the Catholic Church the colour purple symbolises new beginnings and times of change. Indeed, the birth of Jesus was to bring about enormous change across the world, over time, and in our lives.

SLIDE THREE

On the third week of Advent we focus on the message of **Joy**.

In Advent the Church has carefully selected readings from the Bible that help Christians around the world journey together towards Christmas. Today's reading is taken from Luke's Gospel and recounts the visit paid by Mary, pregnant with Jesus, to her cousin Elizabeth who was also pregnant with John the Baptist.

In the reading we hear words spoken by Mary to Elizabeth. Mary's words seem oddly poetic. She was just a teenager when she delivered them and, raised by poor parents in a small town, she would have never attended school. In Mary's world, only youth from wealthy families benefited from an education.

But Mary wasn't without wisdom or knowledge of scripture.

Her words joyfully anticipated the birth of a new kind of leader who would guide the people towards a brighter future and deeper faith in a loving God. Listen carefully to identify how Mary's words could be seen to predict the arrival and ministry of Jesus.

An Advent reading from the Gospel of St Luke 1:36-48, 51-55 (Abridged version)



And Mary said:

'My soul glorifies the Lord,

my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

for he has looked upon his servant in her lowliness...

He has lifted up the poor.

He has filled the hungry with good things;

EXTENSION QUESTION – Working with your neighbour, discuss how these words from Luke's Gospel predict the arrival and ministry of Jesus. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

SLIDE FOUR

The scripture we've just heard is only an excerpt from a longer and lovely passage that communicates the absolute joy of Elizabeth and Mary as they prepare for the birth of their babies and for a new way of life, not just for them, but for the world.

Joy is a wonderful feeling. But do we really understand what the word means?

Question: Can anybody provide a definition of joy?

Answer: A feeling of extreme happiness, especially related to the getting, or expectation, of something good.

As we move ever closer to Christmas day, most of us can identify with this definition. We'll probably be feeling overjoyed at the expectation of lots of presents. No doubt we have a few in mind, maybe an iPhone, or clothes, or a bike.

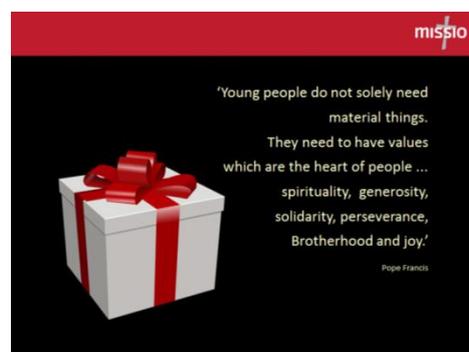
This surely is the joy of Christmas: getting of all these new shiny things?

So what do you think of the following words from Pope Francis... [Click to reveal.](#)

'Young people do not solely need material things. They need to have values which are the heart of people... spirituality, generosity, solidarity, perseverance, brotherhood and joy.'

It may be helpful to define some of these words, especially for younger or less able students, before asking the following:

Raise your hands if you agree with Pope Francis.



EXTENSION DISCUSSION

Can anyone who has raised their hands explain **why** you agree?

Can anyone who has not raised their hands present a counter argument?

Is there a way these different arguments can combine and create a position that benefits all?

Listening carefully and respectfully to differing viewpoints can help us to see an issue better. It can also help us work together and relate better as we grow in understanding of each other.

SLIDE FIVE

One young person who agrees and understands well what the Pope is communicating, is Ajay...

Ajay (in middle image) is ten years old. He was born and raised on a tea plantation in the central highlands of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka (indicated on screen by the red circle), is known as a luxury holiday destination but many of its residents, like Ajay and his family, live in poverty.



Hundreds of years ago Ajay's ancestors were brought to Sri Lanka from India, to live and work like slaves in the country's many tea plantations. These tea-pickers earned very little money and had to live high in the mountains, far away from towns, schools, and health clinics. This remains largely the case today.

Thankfully a few years ago a school was built in the plantation, but wages for the tea-pickers remain low and living conditions basic. The plantation has a poor electricity supply and no running water, so neighbours share an outside water tap and toilet. Illnesses are common, especially in monsoon season when the toilet and homes flood regularly.

In spite of the many hardships, Ajay and his friends continue to find joy in life; most especially through the love and support of family, friends, and adults like Sr Ruby (pictured on screen).

Sister Ruby is a religious sister who visits the plantation regularly. Thanks to donations made by Missio supporters, she brings nutrition and healthcare packs to the children and arranges for doctors and dentists to run clinics on the estate.

Question: What difference do you think these packs make to Ajay and his classmates?

The food and healthcare packs that Sr Ruby delivers all year round, help the children grow fit and well and concentrate more effectively at school. This way Ajay and his classmates have a better chance at succeeding in their studies and finding finding good jobs outside the plantation when they grow up; breaking free of the poverty trap that their ancestors found themselves in.

The images on the screen illustrate a delivery of the packs. They're far different from the packages many children will be opening over Christmas, but they too are gifts sent with love.

The smiles on the children's faces reveal something of the joy that is found when we act in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, wherever they may be.

SLIDE SIX

We deliver the gift of Christmas and the joy of the Gospel into our world every time we follow the example of Jesus and share God's love with others.

Question: How might we do this?

- When we do not exclude or judge those we don't know, but are open to developing friendships.
- When we act with justice and generosity; sharing what we can with those in need.
- When we treat one another with kindness and offer support where we can.
- When we believe that with faith and God's grace we can make a difference in the world.

With this in mind let us close our time together with a special prayer; remembering Ajay as we pray, and all young people who live in poverty.

In our prayer let us also bring to mind those we know whose lives lack joy; asking God to help us offer what we can to make their lives better.

Click in sequence to reveal the prayer.

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to build your Kingdom.

I give you my feet to go your way.

I give you my tongue to speak your words.

I give you my mind that you may think in me.

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.

Above all, I give you my heart that you may love in me

Your Father and all humankind.

I give you my whole self that you may grow in me,

so that it is you, Lord Jesus,

who live and work and pray in me.

SLIDE SEVEN – Closing holding slide

