



# Spiritual Reflection for the Family

## Preparing for the Messiah

### Materials Needed

Bible

### Preparation for the Family Leader

Every day families spend time preparing for simple things such as school, work, or going to bed, we prepare for every day events such as mealtimes and homework.

Throughout the year we also prepare for events. These are the special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries, community celebrations, and holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, we might prepare the garden for planting in the springtime, or we get ready for the summer family camping trip. Families also find themselves preparing for the unexpected events in life, such as the death of a loved one, or the rites of passage such as leaving home for the first time or going away to college.

This family reflection will begin by focusing your family on its experience of *preparing*. Family members will share stories about the numerous things they prepare for as individuals and as families. You are asked to guide your family in a reflection around these experiences and help the family identify what it takes to prepare well for something. For example, to prepare well for a test, one must know which material to focus on—what is most important in the preparation, how to prioritize what topics need the most time for study, how to prioritize time in general in order to prepare well, etc. Your family will identify that we prepare better for the things that are most important.

Next, your family will have the opportunity to reflect on the theme of “preparing” in light of our faith tradition. The particular focus will be Scripture, and the ways in which the people of

God, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, prepared for the coming of the Lord. The family can make connections between preparation for celebration of Jesus’ birth as we read in Scripture and their own preparation for the celebration of Christmas in the home. In order to prepare for the Lord’s coming this year, what is most important for us? How will we prepare well for this event?

Families are busy “preparing” all the time—preparing for the ordinary and more complex events of life daily and throughout the year. The season of Advent focuses the family’s attention on its faithful preparation for the Lord’s coming. What steps can the family take to prepare for the Lord’s coming not only during Advent, but every day of the year in our home? How can we be prepared to see the Lord in the faces and events of our family life? How are we making our home ready for him, always and everyday, not only during Advent?

At the end of the reflection, the family will identify some preparation strategies for use during Advent and throughout the year.

### 1. Introduction to the Theme

Ask family members what the word “prepare” means. Let everyone share what they think.

Share this definition or one from your family dictionary: **Prepare:** to make ready beforehand for a specific purpose or some event, occasion, or the like; to put together or make by combining various elements or ingredients; to put things or oneself in readiness or to get ready.

## 2. Time for Storytelling

Using the following questions as a guide for the family storytelling, share your experiences of preparing for things.

- ❖ What are the things that our family prepares for every day? (For example: school, meals, homework, games, bed.)
- ❖ What are the things that our family prepares for occasionally? (For example: birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, special projects at home or school or work, going on vacation, birth of a child.)
- ❖ What are the things that our family has had to prepare for that were unexpected? (For example: the sickness or death of a loved one, a visit of a friend or relative.)
- ❖ What is typical about the ways the members of our family prepare for things? (For example: Mary always procrastinates and waits until the last minute to get ready for school; Dad is very organized about the projects he does around the house—he writes out extensive lists of things to do (step by step) and what he needs for each project. Michael is a perfectionist—when he prepares a school project, everything about it has to be “just right.”)
- ❖ What does it take to prepare well for something? (For example: having a plan, knowing the priorities of what we are preparing for, having the time to prepare well, choosing how to prepare in the best way, knowing the resources we will need and who we should involve.)

## 3. Stories from Our Faith Tradition

The family leader shares the following:

*Now we see how much of our time in this family is spent “preparing” for things that are going to happen in the future—in a few minutes, a week or a year from now. Some*

*of the things we prepare for are more important than others—for these important events we usually try to prepare well.*

*Throughout history, a focus of preparation for the people of God has been the Lord’s coming. Yes, we would call this an important event! In the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament we read about how our ancestors in faith prepared and waited for the Lord to come. Our family, because we are Catholic, share in this focus of preparation with the generations who have come before us. Like them, we prepare for the Lord to come. We prepare during particular times of the year, such as during Advent to celebrate Jesus’ birth at Christmas, and we prepare throughout the year to be more able to see the Lord being born in each other and in our world. We prepare as we await his coming again in glory.*

Choose from the following Scriptures and read them as a family:

### Preparing for the Lord to Come

The prophet Isaiah suggests that the people must change their ways in order to be saved when the Lord comes; to prepare for the Lord to come we must show justice and do right.

Isaiah 1:7-17, 27-28  
Isaiah 2:6-22  
Isaiah 33:15-17  
Isaiah 51:1-23  
Isaiah 55:6-7  
Isaiah 58:1-14

- ❖ How can our family prepare for the Lord to come by acts of justice and mercy?

### John the Baptist Prepares People

John the Baptist implores the people to get ready quickly, for the Lord is coming. He tells us that we must “get the road ready for the Lord, and make a straight path for him.”

Mark 1:1-8  
Luke 3:1-20

- ❖ The people asked John the Baptist, "What can we do to get ready for the Lord to come?" What did John tell them? How can our family get ready for the Lord to come more fully into our home at Christmas . . . every day?

### **Mary Prepares for the Lord**

Mary, the mother of God, probably didn't plan to have the angel Gabriel show up one day and tell her that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of God's son. But once she had received the message (certainly a surprise), and had accepted it fully, she prepared for his birth by continuing to hand herself over to God in utter trust of God's goodness in her life.

Luke 1:26-56

- ❖ As we prepare for the Lord to come, how can we be like Mary, and trust completely in God's goodness in our lives?

### **Preparing to Live as Jesus Lived**

We prepare ourselves to see Jesus revealed every day by living as Jesus asks us to live.

Prayer: Luke 11:1-13

The way we treat others: Mark 4:21-25

Turning away from sin: Mark 9:42-50

The guide for living: Matthew 5:1-12

The commandments: Matthew 22:34-40

Justice and mercy: Matthew 25:31-46

- ❖ Prepare a list of things we can do so that Jesus is being born daily in our family.

## **4. What Our Family Can Do**

The family leader shares the following:

*Our family prepares every day for many things. We talked about what is important in order to prepare properly for these things.*

*Together with our Catholic community, our family prepares for Jesus to come among us.*

*During Advent we especially prepare ourselves, our hearts and our home for the coming of Jesus in the celebration of Christmas.*

*All during the year, day in and day out, we prepare ourselves, our hearts and our home for the coming of Jesus into our lives in the many ways he does this. We live focused on the reign of God which is at hand.*

### **Create a family “To Do” list for your preparation during Advent.**

- ❖ What will be important to our family this Advent season as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birthday? What do we need to do to prepare well? How can we be sure that we are doing the right things to get ready for the Lord to come again?

#### **Sample:**

- ◆ Pray with the Advent Wreath together every evening at mealtime.
- ◆ Simplify our gift giving, and give gifts of time and self to each other.
- ◆ Prioritize the things involved in our Christmas preparation so that we have time to spend together.
- ◆ Make the manger scene a focal symbol in our home this year.
- ◆ Create an Advent sharing chain and an Advent prayer chain.

### **Create a “To Do” list for the year.**

- ❖ What needs to be a part of our family's ongoing preparation to welcome the Lord Jesus into our home and hearts?

#### **Sample:**

- ◆ Choose several opportunities throughout the year to reach out as a family to those in need.
- ◆ Incorporate morning and nighttime prayer into our daily routine.
- ◆ Once a week, share with each other how we have seen Jesus revealed in the people and situations around us.