



# PARISH SCHOOL OF RELIGION



## Upcoming Dates:

12/1 - PSR Class  
(Grades 3-8 to  
Confession)

12/4 - First  
Reconciliation,  
10:30am in church  
(2nd Grade)

12/8 - PSR Mass,  
6:30pm in gym

12/15 - PSR Class

12/22, 12/29, 1/5 - NO  
PSR Class (Christmas  
Break)

1/12 - PSR Class  
Resumes

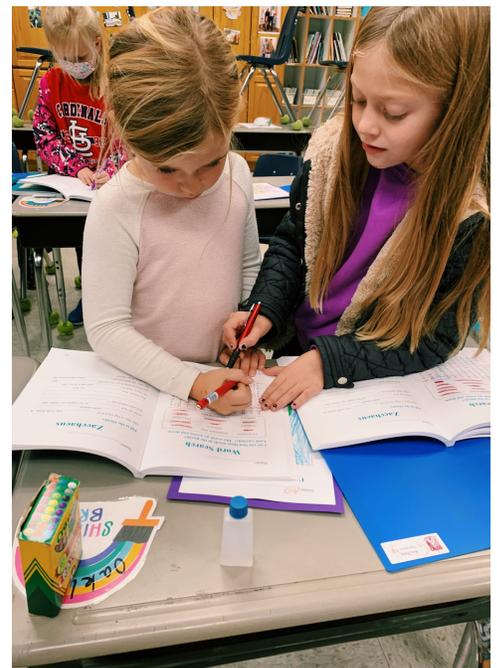
## What's Happening in PSR

Yesterday we began a new year in the Church with the First Sunday of Advent. While we typically acknowledge the new year in January, the Church begins her year with four weeks of Advent as we follow the life of Christ beginning with joyful anticipation of his birth. The Catechism says of the Church's calendar that, "in the course of the year, moreover, [the Church] unfolds the whole mystery of Christ. . . . Thus recalling the mysteries of the redemption, she opens up to the faithful the riches of her Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present in every age" (CCC 1163).

Advent often happens one of two ways: we jump straight to Christmas, skipping our preparation time altogether; or, we intend to celebrate Advent, but life happens, and once we've finished cleaning up after Thanksgiving we realize we're already thrown into Advent, and feel like it's too late to start anything. The truth is that it's not ever too late to celebrate Advent intentionally. This year Christmas falls on a weekend, so we have four full weeks of Advent. In PSR our students will be preparing through tangible signs like making Advent wreaths and calendars, and preparing spiritually by participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I encourage you, while we're still in the beginning of the season, to incorporate some celebration of Advent into your family life. Below you'll find some suggestions how to do so.

Mrs. Katie Maxwell

Director of Family Catechesis





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*Advent is synonymous with hope: not the vain waiting for a faceless god, but concrete and certain trust in the return of Him who has already visited us”*

Pope Saint John Paul II

## Celebrating the Season of Advent at Home

In the world today, many of us just do not like waiting. We want to skip ahead to the celebrating, which is not a bad thing. After receiving the joyful news from the angel Gabriel that she would bear the son of God, Mary still waited nine long months before Jesus was born though. Moreover, the Jewish people waited thousands of years for their Savior. There is wonder in the waiting, and we don't want to miss it as a family. Consider some of the following ways to keep Advent as Advent and Christmas as Christmas in your home this year.

### Prepare your homes

- **Keep it simple.** Consider decorating the house for Christmas more of a marathon than a sprint. Put up decorations little by little. As you decorate more, your home will be a sign that a great celebration is coming.
- **Advent wreaths.** If you do not have one already, consider an Advent wreath for your home. It does not need to be fancy or expensive! Four candles arranged in the shape of a circle to count down the four weeks until Christmas. Typically there are 3 purple candles and 1 pink candle. Use ribbons or small ornaments tied around plain white candles so you don't have to buy colored candles. The light of the candles symbolizes the light Christ brings to the world.
- **Nativity scene.** There are so many styles and options for having a scene of the Nativity in your home. Whether it's in your yard, your home, made of Legos or wood, display the manger without Jesus in his crib yet. We know he is coming, but he is not yet here!



### Prepare your hearts

- **Quiet time.** Find some times to turn off the TV, the radio in the car, and any tablets or devices. When we become more quiet we're allowing God to speak more into our daily lives.
- **Family prayer.** Set aside time for family prayer. Create a list of intentions of people or things you would like to pray for this Advent and watch how it grows. Ask your children to lead you in prayers they know. [For some prayers and conversation starters for each week of Advent, click here.](#)
- **Reconciliation.** Go as a family. If your kids are too young for Confession, take them with you to the church anyway and talk to them about what you're doing.
- **Advent music.** I know Christmas music is everyone's favorite, but there is a whole season's worth of Advent music waiting to be listened to that is just as good! [Click here of a playlist of songs to help get your family in the spirit of Advent.](#) Try to limit Christmas songs until Christmas is actually here.
- **Giving.** When Christ came into the world, he had not even a bed to lay in. While many of us are blessed with more than the basics of what we need, there are those without. Look for some ways to follow Christ's example and give to those in need.
  - Pull a tag off the tree in the church and donate that item to help mothers in need through the Birthright organization.
  - Clear out your home of any household items or winter coats to donate.

Above all, challenge yourself and your family to use Advent as an opportunity for heartfelt communication with God and with one another.

# PSR REMINDERS

## Sacrament of Reconciliation

Third through eighth grade students will go to confession during PSR class this **Wednesday, December 1st**.

**Second grade** (and two students from our third grade class) will make their first confession at our **First Reconciliation service this Saturday, December 4th**. We will begin at **10:30am in the church**.

Students making their first confession and their parents should attend only. We ask that you not bring siblings or guests as we have a large group of students to accommodate in our church. We will have reserved seating in the pews with your family's name. There is no specific dress code requirement, though all boys and girls should be dressed modestly and reverently.

All parents should talk with their children about these upcoming confession dates. The steps for confession are included below. A printed copy of the Act of Contrition will be available to all students when going to confession.

Also called confession, the Sacrament of Reconciliation offers us God's forgiveness of our sins through saying them out loud to a priest and being granted absolution. Before going to confession, it is important to examine your conscience and reflect on the times you sinned against God, so you are ready to say them to the priest.

Consider the following:

- Did I say my prayers every day?
- Did I say mean things to my family or parents?
- Did I always say 'thank you' to people?
- Did I do what my parents and teachers told me to?
- Was I lazy at school? Around the house?
- Have I blamed others for things I do?
- Have I forgiven people when they wronged me?
- Have I cheated or been unfair?
- Did I take anything that didn't belong to me?
- Have I lied to my parents? Teachers? My friends?
- Have I started fights with my siblings or classmates
- Am I unkind to anyone at school or home?

## PSR Mass on December 8

PSR students will attend Mass with their families on **Wednesday, December 8th at 6:30pm** for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Students should not be dropped off on this evening, as students will sit with their families at this Mass and leave once mass is over.

The solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a holy day of obligation where all Catholics are expected to attend Mass. On this day we commemorate Mary, the Mother of God, who was conceived and born without any sin.

## 8th Grade Confirmation Form Due

All 8th grade students are required to choose a sponsor for their Confirmation who is an actively practicing Catholic. **Confirmation sponsor forms are due on December 15th** to let us know who your sponsor is. A copy was included in the packet at the parent meeting. Please look at the PSR page of the parish website if you need another copy, and submit to Mrs. Maxwell by December 15th.

## How to Go to Reconciliation

- After the priest greets you, make the sign of the cross and say: **"Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been (state how long since you have been to confession, or if this is your first time) since my last confession. These are my sins."**
- **Tell your sins simply and honestly** to the priest. You might even want to discuss the circumstances your sins or ask the priest for advice. Serious sins should include how many times you did them.
- Listen to the advice the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then say the **Act of Contrition** for your sins.
- The priest will then dismiss you and you respond with the words **"Thanks be to God."**
- Spend some time with Our Lord thanking and praising Him for the gift of His mercy. Try to pray or perform your penance as soon as possible.

*Hail Mary*

### PRAYER AT DISMISSAL FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.