

# JUST FOR PARENTS...

Today, your children learned about Mary.

One of the challenges of faith is to recognize God's plan for us and to remain open to God's will and God's actions in our world. Filled with God's grace, Mary models for us the kind of faith that is needed to cooperate in God's plan. Like Mary, we are given the awesome opportunity to cooperate in God's saving plan. On this third Sunday of Advent, we are invited to consider how our preparations for Christmas have made us more aware of God's grace working in our lives.

Today we shift our attention from John the Baptist to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Both John and Mary serve as important figures for our reflection during the season of Advent; they both played instrumental roles in preparing the way for Jesus. Last week we reflected on John the Baptist's announcement that the Savior was among us, although not yet recognized. This week we reflect upon Mary's example of faith and obedience to God, traits which permitted her to receive the angel's message that God's Son would be born as a human person, as one of us. We are familiar with the story of the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Mary greeted the angel's news with awe and wonder and asked how it could be possible that she could give birth to a child. In his reply, the angel Gabriel announced the seemingly impossible reality: the child to be born would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would be God's own Son. The angel reported to Mary another miracle; her relative Elizabeth was also pregnant despite having been thought to be unable to have a child. Mary's response to the angel, which is called her *fiat*, is an example of complete faith and obedience to God.

The story of the Annunciation calls to our attention God's wondrous action in human history. God chose a human person to give birth to his Son so that all humanity would know God's salvation. Jesus was born as one of us, fully human and also fully divine. This is the mystery we prepare to celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation. In the model of Mary, we pray that we will be people of faith who recognize God's saving plan for us and are able respond with obedience.

Gather together your family and talk about:

- What you have been doing as a family to prepare for Christmas.
- How have these preparations helped you to better celebrate the central mystery of Christmas, the Incarnation?
- Read Luke 1:26-38.
- Consider the question: What enabled Mary to say yes to God?
- Which of your Advent activities have made you more aware of God's grace in your life?

Practice saying the "Hail Mary" which your children learned today.

**Light Advent and bless Advent Candle**

On this third Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of joy. This candle is a symbol of Mary, the mother of God, the first disciple. Lord, may we always remember that we are called to the joy of discipleship. Help us to pray without ceasing, and to open ourselves to joy, trusting that God has already planted it in us. May we "rejoice always" in the gift of Your presence. Amen