## Student Activity

### Advent

**Grades: K-2nd**

**Goal:** To have the students reflect on the meaning of the Advent season. Why is it important to us as Catholics and how can we make the most of it to help continue our missionary journey. Following the example of San Juan Diego to spread the message of the Gospel, we can also be messengers of the Good News.

**Material:** Stocking outline for each student, crayons, markers, and pencils.

**Instructions:** Discuss with the students the life of San Juan Diego and the meaning of Advent. Then give each student a cut-out of the Christmas stocking, let them decorate the stocking and write on the back the gift or gifts they will offer this Christmas to Jesus. Hang the stocking around the classroom. Before going on Christmas break have the students take the stockings home to remind them of the gifts they are offering Jesus this Christmas.

Advent is a time of waiting and a time to prepare our hearts to welcome Jesus Christ into our homes when we celebrate Christmas on December 25th. As missionary disciples we have to be aware that Advent is also a time of being generous and considerate of others. Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ is a joyous occasion that should be filled with love. Just like when we clean our homes when we are getting ready to have a big celebration. We also have to look at our hearts and clean out any clutter we may have that does not let us bring the joy of the birth of our Savior in our hearts.

San Juan Diego was a man that embraced the joy of the Gospel and was chosen by the Mother of God to be her messenger. He was baptized by the Franciscan Missionaries evangelizing the indigenous community of Mexico and would walk 14 miles to go to mass. On his way to mass he heard music and approached to see where the music was coming from; he saw the Virgin Mary who spoke to him very tenderly, in a way only a mother speaks to her child. She introduced herself as the Virgin Mary Mother of Jesus, the true God, through whom everything lives, the Lord of all things near and far, the Master of heaven and earth. She had a task for him, at first he insisted that he was not important and therefore no one would listen to him. However, she insisted and told him that he was the one to deliver her message to the Bishop to build a cathedral for her. The Bishop did not believe him and he asked for a sign. San Juan Diego came back and revealed the imprint of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on his cloak. It was a miracle and until this day that same cloak is still on display at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. San Juan Diego remained humble and true to his faith, as a true missionary he continued to spread the message of the Gospel to all traveling throughout Mexico.

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to San Juan Diego because she wanted to show God's caring love to all the people suffering in Mexico. She wanted to comfort all who were suffering and prepare the way so that they could be ready to receive her son Jesus Christ, who is the way and truth. Like San Juan Diego we too are chosen to bring the message of love and caring to all. We may think that we are also not going to be listened to, however as we learn from this story because we are God's children we are special and important. Our actions and our humility will allow us to be God's messengers of his love and message of salvation to all. As we celebrate this Advent season let us think of how we can prepare ourselves so that by Christmas we may be ready to celebrate and rejoice with the birth of Jesus Christ in our hearts.

This Christmas most of us expect to receive gifts and presents. Christmas is the day when we as Catholics celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Although we can not give him physical presents we can still offer him some presents on our behalf. Our good actions and service to others are gifts that we can offer to Jesus. We are going to make a mini stocking and write on the stocking the gifts that we are going to offer Jesus this Christmas and the rest of the year. So that like San Juan Diego we too can be messengers of the love that God has for all His children.
Student Activity

Advent

Grades: 3rd-5th

Goal: To help the students reflect on the meaning of Advent and how we are called to live in our homes and in our hearts. Following the example of San Juan Diego we are called to recognize that all of us have a mission to spread the Good News of the Gospel to all.

Materials: Sheet of paper and pencil or pen. Advent card.

Instructions: Share with the students the story of San Juan Diego. He was asked to deliver a message by the mother of God. We too are messengers bringing the Good News of the Gospel. Let the students know that this advent they have been charged with sharing the message of the Good News using only five sentences. Give them enough time to brainstorm and write down how they will share the message. When they are finished they can put what they wrote in the Advent card template attached. Allow them time to decorate their card. They can keep the card with them throughout the year to remind themselves that they are messengers of the Good News.

Advent is a time of waiting and a time of preparing our hearts to welcome Jesus Christ into our homes when we celebrate Christmas on December 25th. As missionary disciples we have to be conscious that Advent is also a time of being generous and considerate of others. Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ is a joyous occasion that should be filled with love. We have to prepare our hearts so that we may be able to receive Christ in our hearts and bring the joy of the birth of our Savior to others. The same way that Our Lady of Guadalupe and San Juan Diego did.

Advent is about embracing our faith in God as His children without letting go of our own cultural identities. God makes no distinction of race or culture, He just embraces us as his children. “In accepting the Christian message without forgoing his indigenous identity, Juan Diego discovered the profound truth of the new humanity, in which we are called to be children of God.” As missionaries it is important to keep this in mind. All of us no matter what our race, culture, or economic status are children of God and He is always with us, meeting us where we are. Just like Mary did with Juan Diego and the indigenous people of Mexico. She presented herself with the characteristics of the indigenous people of the region, spoke their language, and also spoke to them through symbolism in the image that she left in Juan Diego’s cloak. “The miraculous image, which is preserved in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, shows a woman with native features and dress. She is supported by an angel whose wings are reminiscent of one of the major gods of the traditional religion of that area. The moon is beneath her feet and her blue mantle is covered with gold stars. The black girdle about her waist signifies that she is pregnant. Thus, the image graphically depicts the fact that Christ is to be “born” again among the peoples of the New World, and is a message as relevant to the “New World” today as it was during the lifetime of Juan Diego” (Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: biography www.vatican.va/news). Look at an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, do you see any of the things described? Can you imagine being one of those indigenous people looking at the image and understanding all of this without words?

San Juan Diego was already a devout baptized catholic when the Mother of God appeared to him. He was a humble man, a widower, who lived with his elderly uncle caring for him. Our Lady of Guadalupe brought a message of love and hope during the season of Advent to the people of Mexico so that they could prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ among them. After the apparition of Our Lady Guadalupe, San Juan Diego dedicated his life to be of service to others and of sharing the story so that others could also know Jesus Christ, her son. However, when he was first asked to deliver the message San Juan Diego was reluctant and did not think he was right person. He even told Our Lady of Guadalupe that she should look for someone else, someone who was more important so that people would listen to them. However the mother of God insisted and assured him that he was indeed the most qualified person to take her message.

Just like San Juan Diego we are also called to share the message of the Good News. Sharing it with others in ways they will understand. This advent you are being called to share the Good News of the Gospel. However, you can only use five sentences. How and what would you say?
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. “John 3:16

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Advent

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Advent
**Goal:** To help the students reflect on the meaning of the Advent season. Following the example of San Juan Diego we are called to recognize that all of us are called to share the Good News of the Gospel. How can we share this message and help heal the world’s divisiveness?

**Material:** Cardstock or construction paper, pencil, scissors, markers, pens, crayons, and bibles for them to make cards of encouragements for others.

**Instructions:** Read with your students the life of San Juan Diego and the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. How her apparition brought unity to Mexico during a time of division and also paved the way for many to convert to Catholicism. She paved the way for people to open their hearts to accepting the Good News of the Gospel. How can we help others know God and accept Him in their hearts? How can we imitate San Juan Diego who continued to humbly and joyfully spread the news of Our Lady of Guadalupe helping many to know Jesus through his mother? No matter how humble we are God has big plans for us.

Advent is a special time for us as Catholics. It is a time of waiting and also of preparing ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. As missionary disciples we are always looking to bring the presence of God to others. In the story of this month’s saint, we find out God works to bring his message to us from whom we least expect it. San Juan Diego was canonized on July 31, 2002 and in his homily Saint John Paul II, then Pope of the church, acknowledged “Guadalupe and Juan Diego have a deep ecclesial and missionary meaning and are a model of perfectly inculturated evangelization.” The life of San Juan Diego and apparition of the Guadalupe showed the world how God is present in all cultures and in all places. He knows us and understands our needs and is meeting us where we are. For the people of Mexico the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe showed them that God also made them in his likeness and image because his own mother looked like them. This helped the people of Mexico embrace the Catholic faith as their own.

This story reminds us of the importance of taking into consideration the culture and customs of the people missionaries are evangelizing. Our Lady of Guadalupe apparition to San Juan Diego was during the Advent season in 1531. At this time in Mexico, Franciscan missionaries were evangelizing the indigenous people. People were converting to Catholicism thanks to the work being done by the missionaries but there was still a lot of people who did not understand our Catholic faith. San Juan Diego converted to Catholicism and was baptized along with his wife and uncle. He was very devoted and would walk 14 miles to attend mass. On December 9, 1531 a beautiful lady dressed in Aztec and speaking to him in his native language called to him like a loving mother would speak to her child. Introducing herself as the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of the true God. The Mother of God, our mother, came to let her children know that they should prepare themselves to receive Jesus Christ. “Christ’s message, through his Mother, took up central elements of the indigenous culture, purified them and gave them the definitive sense of salvation.” Her image and the fact that she chose San Juan Diego to carry her message demonstrated to the indigenous people that God was above any other, that her Son Jesus Christ was the way and the truth. Her apparition allowed them to see how God was present in their lives and how he was above all things. She prepared the way so that those indigenous people who had not converted (and those who had) understood that the presence of God had been there among them since before the missionaries came.

“In accepting the Christian message without forgoing his indigenous identity, Juan Diego discovered the profound truth of the new humanity, in which we are called to be children of God.” This is what Advent is about. It’s about embracing our faith in God as His children without letting go of our own cultural identities. As missionary disciples we must remember that all of us no matter our race, culture, or economic status, are children of God. Mary with Juan Diego's help gave this message to the indigenous people of Mexico. She presented herself with the characteristics of the indigenous people of the region, spoke their language, and also spoke to them through symbolism in the image that she left in Juan Diego’s cloak. “The miraculous image, which is preserved in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, shows a woman with native features and dress. She is supported by an angel whose wings are reminiscent of one of the major gods of the traditional religion of that area. The moon is beneath her feet and her blue mantle is covered with gold stars. The black girdle about her waist signifies that she is pregnant. Thus, the image graphically depicts the fact that Christ is to be “born” again among the peoples of the New World, and is a message as relevant to the “New World” today as it was during the lifetime of Juan Diego.” (Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin: biography www.vatican.va/news) Look at an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, do you see any of the things described? Can you imagine being one of those indigenous people looking at the image and understanding all of this without words.

After this event San Juan Diego dedicated his life to sharing the story of the apparition of the Mother of God for all to know and embrace the Good News of the Gospel. Living in California we have people of all cultures living here. It is important that as missionary disciples living here we are considerate of the different cultures that make up the Body of Christ. People will know that we are Catholic not by the way we look but by the way we act and the way we treat others. The Mother of God brought healing to a land that was divided from the clash of the new world and those coming to conquer it. In the world we live today there are also a lot of things that are divisive. As children of God we have to bring healing and love to a divisive world. How can we bring healing to a world that is divided? The power of prayer can help start the healing. As we prepare for Christmas Day we are going to offer someone the gift of prayer this Advent.

Give each of the students the materials needed to make a card of encouragement for someone they know is in need of prayer this Advent. They will fold the construction paper or cardstock paper in half. In front they will draw an advent wreath or an image related to the Advent season. Then on the inside write the name of a person and an encouraging message for them this Advent. Encourage them to look for a bible passage and write it inside the card. Set aside a few minutes each day during which the children can pray for this person every day.