Advent is a period of preparation, extending over four Sundays, before Christmas. The season of Advent, the time of preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas and the start of the liturgical year in the Roman Catholic Church, begins on a different date each year. Advent 2011 begins on the First Sunday in Advent, November 27, 2011. This marks the beginning of the Year of Mark.

This time in schools is traditionally known as a busy time with many things to be completed. Sometimes teaching about these two significant seasons of the Church can be lost or even omitted with a clear focus being given to the secular meaning of Christmas. A suggested approach could be to structure the last weeks of the school term as follows: Week 7: teaching about Advent; Week 8: teaching about Christmas. This teaching and learning can be incorporated into preparation for Christmas pageants and end of year prayer celebrations.

Given the limited amount of time, it is recommended that teachers choose approximately 3 learning opportunities from the Possible Learning opportunities for Teaching Advent and 3 learning opportunities from the Possible Opportunities for Praying Advent.

Learning Intentions and Conceptual Organisers:

**Celebration and Prayer**
- Prayer and ritual give expression and meaning to experiences of God.

**Scripture**
- .1 Scriptural texts contain a range of textual features and text types that assist Christians in making meaning.
- .2 Scriptural texts are composed and comprehended contextually.
- .3 Scriptural texts are interpreted critically using a range of processes.

Advent: Colours and Symbols
Advent's Double Meaning
Advent Amid the Gift Wrap
Four Gifts for You This Advent
This Advent, Turn Your Gratitude Into the Gift of Hope
Advent (Source: Wikipedia)
Gospel Audiences
Online Advent Calendars
General Advent Facts from the Liturgical Commission

Inquiry Questions:
- What does the word Advent mean? Where does the word come from?
- What are the key messages and symbols of the season of Advent?
- How long does Advent last? What are some key scripture texts during this season?
- How is the Church Liturgical Year organised? (seasons, readings, themes or message, colours and symbols) When does the Church Liturgical Year begin and end?
- What is a Jesse Tree? What are differences/similarities between Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew and Luke’s gospels?
- How does the Advent wreath help to prepare Christians for Christmas?
- Why and how do people use Advent calendars? Where did Advent calendars originate?

Teaching & Praying Advent

Resources & Teacher Background:
- Advent: Colours and Symbols
- Advent's Double Meaning
- Advent Amid the Gift Wrap
- Four Gifts for You This Advent
- This Advent, Turn Your Gratitude Into the Gift of Hope
- Advent (Source: Wikipedia)
- Gospel Audiences
- Online Advent Calendars
- General Advent Facts from the Liturgical Commission

Possible opportunities for Praying Advent:
- Pray while creating a Mandala. Create a class or whole school Rice Mandala with the prayer focus: celebrating the waiting period of Advent.
- Pray with scripture passages using Lectio Divina. Select a passage from one of the Infancy Narratives.
- Create a placemat prayer on the theme of Journey, waiting, preparing in anticipation.
- Have the students keep a Prayer Journal each day. Explore themes of waiting, yielding to God, surrender. Pray using the prayer reflective Advent Calendar: www.caritas.org.au/advent
- Organise a student retreat or prayer walk on the theme of Journey. Focus on Matthew’s Gospel and the Journey of the Magi. The Magi began a journey, when they visited the infant child, they were changed; they went home by another route. How often do we begin a journey on one path, thinking we know the map, the way home, the way we are going in life, and then to have that changed, to then continue the journey on another path?
- Explore the theme of Waiting through Contemplative Prayer: being still, in the moment, yielding to God through stillness, silence and meditation.
- Pray using the Advent Wreath. The first candle represents the Old Testament prophets who foretold Christ’s coming. The second candle represents John the Baptist, who pointed to Jesus as the ‘Lamb of God.’ The third is for Mary who prepared herself and presented Jesus to the world. The fourth candle represents us, who are now called to prepare ourselves to be prophets and witnesses.
Possible learning opportunities for Teaching Advent:

- “What do we know about Advent?” Students are prompted to identify the liturgical colours, prayers, practices, symbols and traditions associated with Advent. Student record their responses e.g. using Writeboard™, Wallwisher™ or Placemat Strategy.
- Reflect on the data from previous activity and brainstorm possible inquiry questions (see above for some examples). Display these questions e.g. Poster or chart, whiteboard, or Wallwisher™.
- Students use the “Sounds, Sights and Feelings” Retrieval Chart to explore the way sounds, sights and feelings help people understand and make meaning of the liturgical season of Advent. Students use the retrieval chart questions as a stimulus for research and exploration.
- Discuss how Advent is a time to WAIT, PREPARE and BE READY for the birth of Jesus. Students use mindmaps, concept maps or Bubbl.us™ to brainstorm or recall times when they have waited for a special occasion such as birthdays, special visitors etc. Students describe how they felt when they were waiting and what preparations they made for the special occasion.
- Students listen to the story of the Annunciation & Visitation (Luke 1:26-55). Students analyse the story by responding to a variety of Meaning Maker questions [Four Resources Model]: What does this text mean to you? What does the title tell us about what the text might be about? What are the characters thinking / feeling? How do you know? What might happen next? Why? What message is the author trying to tell us? What is the text about? What are the main ideas? Explore the themes of waiting and hoping in this scripture story. These types of questions are presented to students e.g. verbally, on charts or posters, using a simple online questionnaire such as Polldaddy™.
- Students construct and illustrate a chart or poster of the Church Liturgical Year that identifies the liturgical seasons and its colours. Students add to the poster the secular seasons and some significant school activities in the school year.
- Student design prayer mats that include symbols and colours of Advent, scripture quotes, prayers related to HOPE or JOY. Write prayers using the You Who Do Through format.
- Students search the Internet for images/symbols of Advent. Upload images into Fotobabble™ and have student narrate what the symbols mean. [See an example of how Fotobabble™ works]
- Advent is a time for preparing for Jesus. Students identify gifts that they can be for others e.g. kindness, courageous. Students create an Advent Tree of Kindness.
- Students write prayers, actions, scripture quotes, or reflections for each chain.
- Investigate the history and a range of online Advent Calendars. Students create an Advent calendar that will include possible positive actions that they could do for others.
- Use this Web calendar to remind you to do something each day to share the meaning of the season.
- Investigate the stories and the symbols that are connected to the Jesse Tree. Find out more about the symbolism of the Jesse Tree and view information from the Liturgical Commission.
- Create an Advent wreath. The circular shape of the wreath is a symbol of God and God’s love: without beginning or ending. Explain the significance of the five Advent candles. Name four actions you can undertake in Advent which focus on living out the message of Jesus.
- Students form expert groups to read and reflect on the readings of Advent and Christmas Year B. Expert groups respond to a variety of Meaning Maker questions [Four Resources Model]: What does this text mean to you? What does the title tell us about what the text might be about? What message is the author trying to tell us? What are the main ideas? Student report back to their home groups to share their learnings.

Possible Assessment Opportunities:

- Students design prayer cloths, banners, or lectern drapes for the Advent Season and sacred rituals. Students use appropriate symbols and colours that help individuals and groups make meaning of the liturgical season. Students write a justification for their choice of colour and use of symbols in their designs. Students should make some reference to liturgical resources in their justification/s.
- Students design and create an Advent card, bookmark, Advent calendar. Students choose appropriate images, scripture quotes, symbols and colours.