

December Lesson Plan: Incarnation and Humility

Advent Waiting, Christmas Wonder, and the Nearness of God

December invites us into the heart of the **Advent and Christmas mystery**: the God who becomes small, humble, and near. In the Franciscan tradition, the Incarnation is the center of all spirituality a God who takes on our humanity, chooses poverty, and dwells among us in tenderness and simplicity.

As we journey through this month, we reflect on:

- The quiet waiting and joyful expectation of Advent
- The **poverty of the Incarnation**, God's self-emptying love
- Emmanuel: *God-with-us*, especially among the lowly and forgotten
- **Greccio**, where St. Francis created the first nativity scene, inviting us into crib-side wonder and radical closeness to Christ

Key Question:

Where, in my life and community, do I encounter God's humility and closeness?

Welcome & Centering Prayer

Place a small nativity figure, candle, or Advent wreath in the center of the gathering space.

Opening prayer:

"Humble Lord, You chose to be born in simplicity and poverty. Open our hearts to recognize Your nearness in the ordinary moments of our lives. Teach us to welcome You with tenderness and joy. Amen."

Opening

Suggested Scripture Passages

- **Luke 2:1–20** — The birth of Jesus in humility.
- **Philippians 2:5–7** — Christ empties himself and takes the form of a servant.

Reflection prompts:

- What aspect of the Nativity story speaks most to you this year?
- How do you experience God coming close in small, quiet ways?
- What does humility look like in your relationships or community?

Teaching Content

A. Advent Spirituality: Quiet Waiting & Joyful Preparation

- *Advent is a season of expectation: watching, listening, and preparing.*
- *Franciscan Advent emphasizes inner stillness, simplicity, and hope.*
- *Waiting becomes a spiritual posture open hands rather than anxious striving.*

B. Poverty of the Incarnation — God Made Small

- *God chooses simplicity, not grandeur.*
- *The Incarnation reveals:*
 - *humility*
 - *vulnerability*
 - *solidarity with the poor*
 - *love that bends low to lift us up*
- *The manger becomes a sign of God's desire to dwell among those who have little.*

C. Emmanuel: God Near the Lowly

- *Christ is born into obscurity, not power.*
- *God draws close especially to:*
 - *the overlooked*
 - *the weary*
 - *the marginalized*
 - *the humble of heart*
- *We encounter the Incarnation whenever we meet tenderness, mercy, or human vulnerability.*

D. Greccio: A Franciscan Christmas

- *In 1223, St. Francis created the first live nativity scene at Greccio.*
- *His goal: to help people encounter the humility, poverty, and tenderness of Christ.*
- *Greccio invites us to:*
 - *approach the manger in wonder*
 - *see the Incarnation as happening now, not only then*
 - *recognize Christ in the poor and in one another*

Invite reflection and sharing:

- *Where in my life do I see God's humility at work?*
- *How can I practice Advent waiting in a busy season?*
- *What parts of the Nativity story challenge or inspire me most?*
- *How do I bring the spirit of Greccio into my home or community?*

Love in Action: Incarnational Love

✓ **Perform one "hidden gift" each week — help someone quietly, without seeking acknowledgement.**

✓ **Support a family or child in need during Christmas.**

Live the generosity of the God who gives Himself.

✓ **Spend time in quiet prayer reflecting on Christ's humility in the manger.**

Reflect: The Humility of the Incarnation

- **Sit in silence before a nativity scene or image of the Christ Child.**
- **Notice what emotions or thoughts arise.**
- **Ask: *Where is Christ desiring to be born in my life?***

Monthly Prayer

"Lord, be born in the quiet places of my heart."

Repeat this prayer during moments of stress, busyness, or distraction.

Encourage participants to choose:

1. One Advent practice (silence, Scripture, evening prayer, an Advent wreath ritual).
2. One act of Incarnational Love from the Love in Action list.
3. One area of life where they can welcome God's humility more fully (relationships, habits, time use, generosity).

Encourage them to journal or share their insights at the next gathering.

Prayer: God of tenderness, in the Christ Child You became small so we might know the greatness of Your love. Teach us to walk in humility, to rejoice in Your nearness, and to share Your love with those most in need. May we welcome You anew into our hearts and our community. Amen."

Notes: