

Advent Manger

Advent is the season before Christmas when we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus. But why do we need an entire season to prepare for Christmas? Like with anything else that is special and important to us, we want to be ready for it. We wouldn't want it to just come and go without much meaning, or without the proper meaning. So we prepare. Christmas is very special and important. God loved us so much that He became a man and came down to earth for our sake. Christmas Day is God's Birthday! Yet for most people, Christmas often just means a day where we think about ourselves. We'll give and open presents, eat food, sing carols that have nothing to do with Jesus, have fun with family and friends, and all the while think of Jesus only a little bit at Church, if at all. What a sad way to celebrate God's Birthday! Jesus certainly does not mind us celebrating on His day. Of course it's worth celebrating! But we have to remember *why* we are celebrating. It's easy to understand how Jesus feels so hurt when He is forgotten on His Own Birthday.

So, that is why the Church gives us Advent. Advent is roughly four weeks of preparation for this wonderful season of Christmas. It is especially meant to help us prepare ourselves on the inside - to make our *souls* ready for Jesus' coming. It is to help us be sure that we are not too distracted with external things, so that we can remember Jesus and really make Him happy.

One way you can do this is by planning and working on a present to give Jesus on His Birthday! Wouldn't it be sad if you had no gift for your best friend on their birthday because you didn't think of it and were too busy? But on the other hand, how wonderful would it be if you surprised your friend with the present they wanted most! And what does Baby Jesus want the most? Your love - proven and shown by your prayers, and sacrifices. This is just what you can give Him! And the purpose of this craft is to help you see and keep track of your precious gifts of love.

Start with an empty 'manger'. For every sacrifice that you make, or extra prayer well said, you can place one piece of hay/straw in the manger. You can also use 'Sacrifice Beads' to help you keep track of your gifts during the day. That way, you would not need to put in a strand of straw *every time* you made a sacrifice, but you could wait until the end of the day and then put in the total amount. To make your own pair, be sure to see our craft "Sacrifice Beads".

You can have your own personal little manger, or a larger one for the whole family to fill together. In that case, everyone would help with the same manger, making their own sacrifices and placing their straws in with the others. With each sacrifice that is made, the crib for Jesus will be filled with more and more hay for Him to rest upon on Christmas Day! Remember that when He came so many, many years ago on that first Christmas - nobody had or made any room for Him in their home. How wonderful it will be *this* Christmas for Jesus to find a warm, full manger for Him to rest His little head on. You cannot imagine how grateful He and His two dear Parents, Mary and Joseph, will be! They will especially feel and remember the love behind all the sacrifices and prayers that are placed in each and every piece of straw.

WITH YOUR PARENTS' PERMISSION

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Make Your Own!

1. Get your parents' permission and say a prayer to Guardian Angel for help.
2. Gather all your supplies:

- **Hay/Straw (to place in the manger)**
- **Manger**
- **Baby Jesus**

(Note: You do not have to get any exact materials to make any parts of this. It doesn't really matter what it is made out of - just as long as you have something that will work for you.)

-Hay/Straw

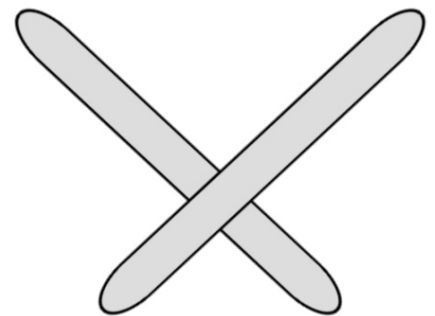
- A small bag of straw, shredded paper, or even Easter grass
- If you want to make your own, you can just cut yellow construction paper (or any paper) into little strips

-Manger

- Anything that will hold straw and the Baby Jesus can work as a manger. Whatever you use, be sure that it is the right size to hold the Child Jesus and to fill with sacrifices.
- A small wood box, cardboard box, or even an empty shoe box would work. You can decorate the outside of whatever you are going to use to look like a manger!
- You can also make your own popsicle stick manger.
 - You will need:
 - **at least 18 popsicle/craft sticks (4-6 will be used for the legs)**
 - **glue**

To Make a Popsicle Stick Manger:

1. Take 2 popsicle sticks, pressing them flat together make an "X" with them, making sure the point where they join is lower than a true "X". This is one pair of the manger's legs. What you are going to want is for the top part to flare out wider than the bottom, but you also want to make sure that the manger will stand. Glue these two together where they join.

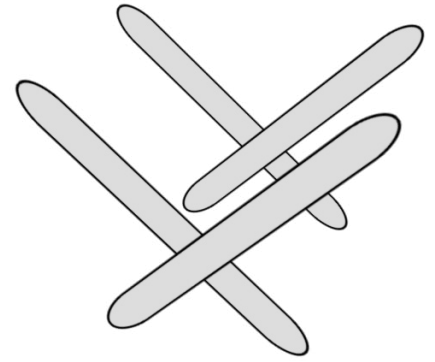


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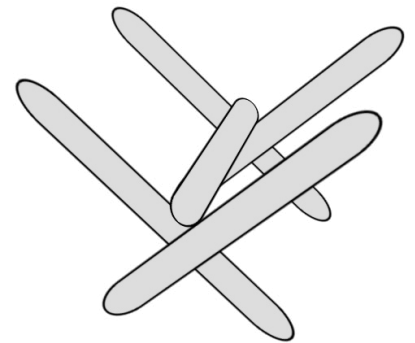
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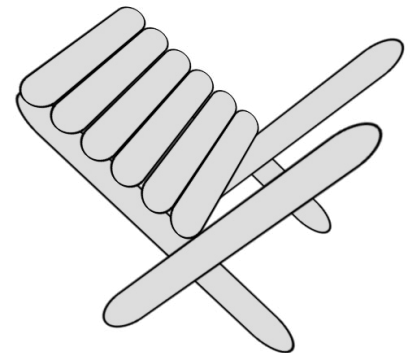
2. Repeat Step # 1. Let these dry. Now you have the legs to your manger.



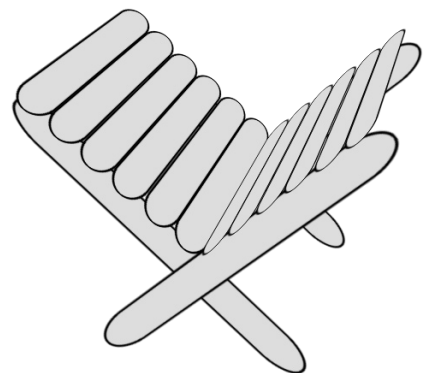
3. Lay another popsicle stick over the two legs of the manger. Laying flat across both, push it down until it's edge is in the "V" part of the connected sticks. The two legs will be apart, and at the edges of this new flat stick. What you are doing is laying in the first board of the bed of the manger. Glue together where the sticks touch.



4. Now, lay another stick next to the one you just placed in. Glue it to the legs as you did the last one.



5. Repeat Step 4 until you have the manger as wide as you want it, or as many as will fit on the popsicle stick legs.



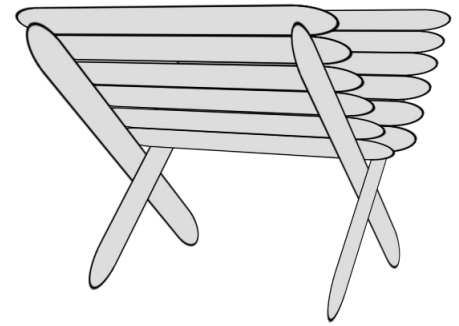
6. Now, start on the other side of the "V" point, and repeat step 3 (as you need to) and step 4 as you desire.

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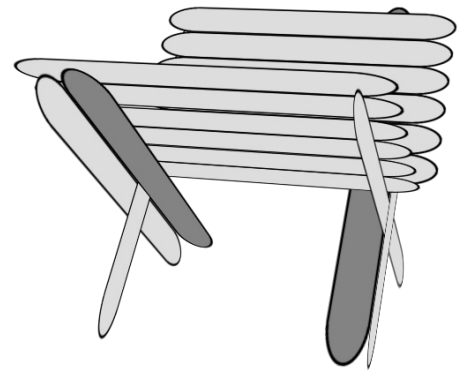
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If you want extra support for your manger, you can do steps 7 and 8 (these are optional).

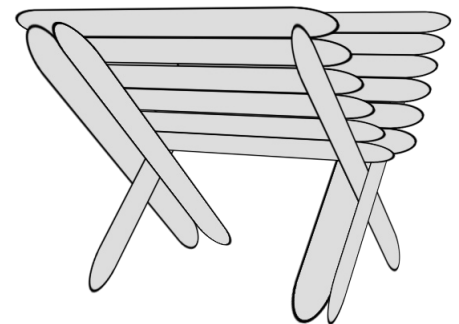


7. Right next to one set of legs, on the outside of the manger, take one popsicle stick (colored dark gray in the illustration) and gently glue it flat up to the boards. You're making a third leg for this side, so make sure that it will stand with the other legs. It is not facing the same direction as the other legs.



8. You can repeat Step 7 for the other set of legs on the opposite side of the manger.

9. Now that your manger is done, set it aside for a while so that the glue will dry and it will be strong. Be sure to give it a good amount of time, you would not want to accidentally break it while checking to see if it was ready.



10. Fill your manger with straws of sacrifices for Baby Jesus!

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-Baby Jesus

- Any size statue or picture of the Christ Child would work, just as long as you have your parents' permission and it will fit in your manger
- If you don't have a statue, you can color and cut out the Baby Jesus image that is included at the end of these instructions.
- Be sure to keep your Baby Jesus in a safe spot until you place Him in the manger on Christmas Day.

By the time that Christmas comes you will hopefully have completely filled your manger with straw as a comfortable resting place for Jesus. Remember that it is most especially the love behind your gifts that will keep Jesus happy and warm in His special birthday manger.



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