

FULFILLMENT: The Fourth Sunday of Advent

On this Sunday we rejoice at the good news of the Incarnation.

“Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’” (Luke 1:30-33)

Advent Wreath Prayer

Light the fourth candle and say:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light! (Isaiah 9:1-2)



God of wisdom, bless us with Mary’s “yes” as we welcome Emmanuel into our hearts and homes. Amen.

Family Advent Activity:

Spend Time at the Crib — Encourage each member of your family to spend some quiet time in prayer near the Nativity scene at home or in your parish. What does the manger teach us? How could God allow his Son to be born in a stable? Give thanks for the gift of Christ and the joy of the Christmas season to come.



Reflect: How might we be better witnesses, like the angels, to God’s love for us in Christ?

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Biblical Roots of Advent

Throughout the season of Advent, the Scriptures invite us to prepare for the One who is to come — Emmanuel, God-with-us.



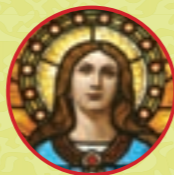
PRAYER

In his First Letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul exhorts us to “pray without ceasing” (5:17). In the Advent days of preparation, we are reminded that our entire lives should be lived as prayer so that our words and actions might give glory to God. Setting aside time to pray each day is a nourishing way to strengthen your relationship with God.



REFLECTION

The Scriptures throughout the weeks of Advent call us to ready our hearts and minds for the Incarnation. As part of this preparation, we are invited to examine the shadows in our lives and to ask forgiveness for our sins. Attending the Sacrament of Reconciliation frees us from the stain of sin and renews our hearts for the miracle of Christmas.



HOPE

Christians are called to great hope; the Advent Scripture readings are filled with exaltation and hope. One of the greatest signs of hope in the New Testament is Mary. Even though she is afraid, Mary says “yes” to the angel of Lord and agrees to the awesome responsibility of becoming the mother of Jesus — indeed, the mother of God (see Luke 1:26-27). Mary’s role is to bring others to Christ. We foster hope when we follow in her footsteps.

Additional Resources

Books

An Advent Pilgrimage: Preparing Our Hearts for Jesus, Archbishop J. Peter Sartain (Our Sunday Visitor, 2014).

Advent Reflections: Come, Lord Jesus! Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007).

Pope Francis and the Joy of the Gospel: Rediscovering the Heart of a Disciple, Edward Sri (Our Sunday Visitor, 2014).

A Year of Mercy with Pope Francis: Daily Reflections, Pope Francis, edited by Kevin Cotter (Our Sunday Visitor, 2014).

Website

Advent, Articles, Posts, and Other Resources. Our Sunday Visitor, www.osv.com/MyFaith/ChurchSeasonsandFeasts/Advent.aspx

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PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD!

Advent Guide

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In these dark days of winter, let us journey through Advent, preparing our hearts and homes for the coming of Emmanuel, God-with-us, Jesus the Christ.

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Advent is rich with sacred symbols. The Scriptures are filled with images of light and darkness, cacophony and silence, waiting and fulfillment. The color of the season is deep purple, reflecting the penitential and reflective nature of the season. Both the circular shape and the evergreen of the Advent wreath suggest eternal and everlasting life. Arrive a bit early at Mass each Sunday, and look around your parish for the signs and symbols of the season. What do your kids notice? What do you notice?

Candlelight – Christ is the light of the world

Evergreen – In Jesus, we are given the gift of eternal life

Water – We recall our baptism and are born anew in Jesus

Chant – We await the birth of the babe in the manger

Angels – Witness to the Good News

Star – The cosmic sign that the King of Kings has been born

The central focus of the season is the coming of the Lord. Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses this twofold meaning: “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for His second coming” (524).

EXPECTATION: The First Sunday of Advent

The Scriptures remind us to stay awake for we know not when the Lord will come.

“Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’” (Mark 13:35-37)

Advent Wreath Prayer

Light the first candle and say:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light! (Isaiah 9:1-2)

God of compassion,
be with us in these long and dark days
as we await the birth of your son, Jesus.
Amen.



If your children are old enough, allow them to take turns lighting the candles on the wreath. Little children may help blow them out.

Family Advent Activity:

The Ringing of the Bells — Place a bell (or a cluster of sleigh bells) in a prominent place in your home. Draw names after Sunday Mass each week, and pledge to do something nice for the family member whose name you choose. Each time you do something nice for the person, ring the bells. Listen to the sound of kindness filling your house!

Reflect: How do the sounds of the season — bells, chant music, children’s laughter, and excitement — help enhance our Advent experience?



PROCLAMATION: The Second Sunday of Advent

John the Baptist proclaims the coming of the Messiah – how will we prepare?

“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

‘Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way.
A voice of one crying out in the desert:
“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.”’

John [the] Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mark 1:1-4)

Advent Wreath Prayer

Light the second candle and say:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light! (Isaiah 9:1-2)

God of salvation,
help us give voice to the voiceless
as we cry out in the name of your son, Jesus.
Amen.



Family Advent Activity:

Adopt-a-Family — Sign up to help another family this Advent season through your parish, Catholic Charities, or a local organization. Bring your kids along to help select the gifts. Remember, the basics are always needed: coats, hats, mittens, socks, undergarments, and pajamas.

Reflect: The candles on the Advent wreath remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. How might we reflect the light of Christ to others this season and beyond?



CELEBRATION: The Third Sunday of Advent

On this Sunday we celebrate and rejoice in the eternal power of God.

“The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, To announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.” (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Advent Wreath Prayer

Light the third, rose-colored candle and say:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light! (Isaiah 9:1-2)

God of blessings,
we celebrate your good gifts
and rejoice at the gift of your son, Jesus.
Amen.

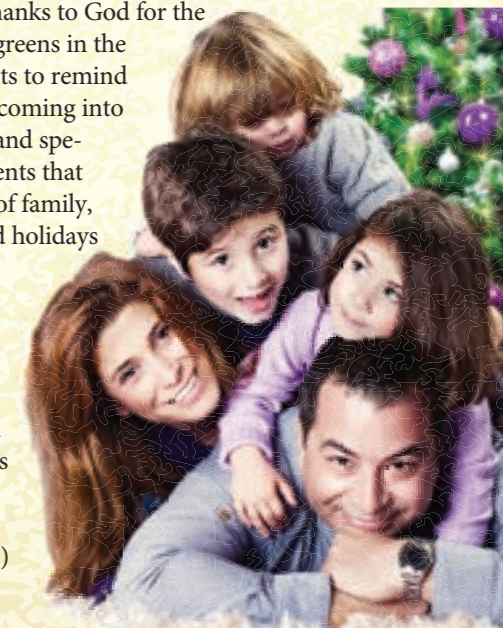


Family Advent Activity:

Bless the Tree — As you put up the family Christmas tree, give thanks to God for the gift of evergreens in the winter, lights to remind us of Jesus coming into the world, and special ornaments that remind us of family, friends, and holidays past.

Reflect:

What does the evergreen teach about God’s love for us? (Hint: it is everlasting!)



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