

Advent Prayer

Gracious and loving God, thank you for the gift of holiness. Give us the grace we need to respond to your love. Help us to understand our God-given mission in life. Allow us to use our gifts and talents in ways that are pleasing to you. Amen.



Waiting Together

Make waiting for Jesus an active task with these ideas or create your own list!

- Bring more joy to your days and those of others by consciously remembering to smile more, which can improve your mood and that of others.
- Increase your generosity with an offer of money, goods, or service to causes for the least of those in your community.
- Life presents endless moments that test our patience and kindness. Choose one aspect of your everyday experiences in which to be wildly patient or kind. Perhaps it's toward other drivers when on the road. Maybe it's with your coworkers. Or it could be those chaotic hours between the end of the school day through dinner and homework. Be extravagant, just as Jesus is with his love and grace.

5 Ways to Practice Advent Joy

- 1** As this Advent begins, start or deepen a specific prayer ritual, an intentional time for prayer, during the day. This designated time with a particular prayer you enjoy can set the atmosphere for your day: recognizing all the ways God is already — and always — with you.
- 2** Decide on one thing to do each day to be more aware of the present moment.
- 3** John the Baptist shouted his message to the people. Decide on one thing you can do that “shouts” to your part of the world that you are a disciple of Jesus.
- 4** Remember Mary. To celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8), place out-of-season flowers at a Mary statue as a reminder that “nothing is impossible with God.”
- 5** Do you know someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one, chronically ill, worried, unemployed, or discouraged? Think of some way to include them in your twelve days of Christmas plans.



Our Sunday Visitor engages, catechizes, and inspires millions of Catholics with relevant and easy-to-read pamphlets like this one. The wide range of topics available includes:

- Church teachings
- The sacraments
- Current events
- Seasonal themes
- Stewardship
- Papal teachings

To view our current offerings and see sample PDFs online, visit orderosv.com.

To order additional quantities of this or any other pamphlet contact:



800.348.2440 • osv.com

Copyright © by Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.
No part of this pamphlet may be reprinted or reproduced in any form.

Inventory No. P2637
Nihil Obstat: Msgr. Michael Heintz, Ph.D.
Censor Librorum
Imprimatur: ✠ Kevin C. Rhoades
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

The *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur* are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the *Nihil Obstat* or *Imprimatur* agree with the contents, opinions, or statements expressed.

Scripture quotations are from the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible—Second Catholic Edition (Ignatius Edition)*, copyright © 2006 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Advent

Enter the Moment



For Review Only. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.

Advent often comes and goes in a blur. The rush of preparing for Christmas, for bringing the calendar year to an end as the liturgical year starts anew, can often outshine the reason we set aside four weeks to prepare our homes and our hearts.

This year, too, has come and gone in a blur. The hopes, goals and dreams we hold as we turn the calendar page can quickly be put aside in order to focus on essentials — health, family, and, hopefully, faith — yet even this is often filled with distractions.

No matter what the past year has looked like for you, Advent is a great opportunity to regain your footing. It's an invitation to take a step back and recognize what is most important.

So this Advent, let's reevaluate. Put your time and energy into the practices and traditions that fill you with life, joy, and hope. Say no to things that clutter your schedule or distract you from the season. Lower your worldly expectations for what this Advent should be like. Enter the moment.

Most importantly, go back to the basics with these suggestions. Meditate on Mary's wholehearted yes to God's unconventional plan. Focus on the Incarnation and what it means that Christ entered into our broken world, for you and for me. Reflect on the symbols of the



season and how they can help you invite Jesus into your home and heart to regain in a new way a sense of wonder for this most miraculous gift — God himself.

Advent doesn't have to be complicated. The Lord is coming. Let us rest in God's love and rejoice.

The Kingdom Is Near

Yes, this is a very busy time of year. There's shopping, baking, social commitments at work and with family and friends, decorating, special events to attend ... but as Jesus reminded us, the Son of Man is coming. And there's no date set in stone and no Google Calendar reminder to announce the Second Coming. We have to live like we're ready, all of the time. "But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with ... cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly" (Lk 21:34).

Running from commitment to obligation doesn't leave much room for joy and praise, peace and prayer. This Advent, start your planning with a blank slate. Will Christmas still come even if you don't exchange presents with your siblings? Who says you have to put up a tree? What are your Advent essentials?

Then, with great deliberation, consider writing in only those activities and traditions that are most precious — the things that make your heart feel full of love for God and for your neighbor. Do only these, and do them with joy. During Advent, live as if you were going to meet Jesus each and every day.



The Advent Wreath

For centuries Catholics have lit an Advent wreath as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. The evergreen branches represent everlasting life promised to us by Jesus. The candles remind us that Jesus came into the world to dispel darkness and radiate the light of God's love.

If you wish to make your own Advent wreath, you'll need four candleholders, three purple candles, one pink candle, and real or artificial evergreen branches to circle the candles in the shape of a wreath. Some families add a white candle in the center to light on Christmas Eve.

Here is a simple candle-lighting ceremony to use each week:

1st week: The first purple candle signifies hope. Light the candle and pray: *Dear God, help each member of our family to wait patiently for the coming of Jesus. Fill us with hope. Amen.*

2nd week: The second purple candle signifies peace. Light two purple candles and pray: *Dear God, help each member of our family to wait in wonder and awe for the coming of Jesus. Fill us with a deep sense of peace. Amen.*

3rd week: The pink candle signifies joy. Light two purple candles, one pink candle, and pray: *Dear God, help each member of our family understand the true meaning of Christmas. Fill us with joy as we wait for the coming of Jesus. Amen.*

4th week: The fourth candle signifies love. Light all the candles and pray: *Dear God, help each member of our family grow in appreciation of others as we prepare for the birth of Jesus. Fill us with love. Amen.*

Saying Yes to God

Luke 1:26-38

This Gospel passage is the account of the annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel that she is to be the mother of Jesus. The angel announces God's desire that Mary bear a child, who will be great — the Messiah, the holy Son of God. The messenger greets Mary, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" Mary is blessed because God has chosen her to be part of God's saving plan. The phrase "the Lord is with you" is a frequent expression throughout sacred Scripture for God's assurance. No matter what obstacles Mary faces, God's indwelling in her will be realized.

Gabriel tells Mary: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." The point of the Spirit's coming upon and overshadowing Mary is to place this woman in deep, attentive relation to God. We, like Mary, are challenged to be open to God's Holy Spirit coming upon us, for it is the oxygen we need to live our faith.

Mary's response needs to be our response as well: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Gabriel's departing words ring with assurance: "With God nothing will be impossible." They echo Jesus' later declaration, "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (Lk 18:27). A virgin can conceive. The Lord can enter into human history as a child. From a tomb can come the Resurrection. It is a promise in the future tense, providing hope for the rest of Advent and forever.



Symbols of the Season

Advent is rich with sacred symbols. The Scriptures are filled with images of light and darkness, cacophony and silence, waiting and fulfillment. The season's color is purple, reflecting the penitential and preparatory nature of the season. Watch for these symbols:



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



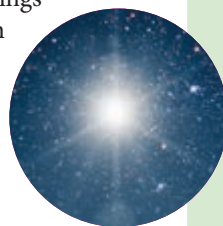
Chant

We await the birth of the babe in the manger



Star

The cosmic sign that the King of Kings has been born



Angels

Witnesses to the Good News

For Review Only. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.