

# Advent



wait • hope • prepare

## What does Advent mean?

Advent comes from the Latin word *Adventus*, which means “coming.”

## What is the purpose of Advent?

“Advent has a twofold character: as a time to prepare for the solemnity of Christmas when the Son of God’s first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, the season of Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation.” (GNLY, 39)



## Why wait for Christmas?

We need Advent! We are longing for the Lord! We are joyfully expecting Him and prayerfully preparing for His triumphant return! This liturgical season is for us to get ourselves ready for Christ. Don’t jump ahead!

## How do you prepare?

How do you prepare when a friend comes over to visit? You clean house; you get yourself ready! You should do the same for the Lord. Go to Confession. Go to Mass. Pray. Prepare your heart and mind for Him.

## When is Advent?

It is the liturgical period directly before Christmas—about four weeks. It is also the start of our liturgical year. Happy Catholic New Year!

## When does Advent start?

Advent begins with Evening Prayer I on the Sunday falling on or closest to November 30<sup>th</sup>.

## When does Advent end?

Advent ends before Evening Prayer I of Christmas (December 24<sup>th</sup>).

## How long is Advent?

Depends on when the Sunday closest to November 30<sup>th</sup> is. It can be as short as 22 days or as long as 28 days. The season of Advent was originally a 40 day fast in preparation for Christmas. Many in the Byzantine Catholic Church still celebrate a 40 day Advent.



## What are the colors for Advent?

Violet for all of Advent. Rose or violet may be used for Gaudete Sunday.

## What is Gaudete Sunday?

Gaudete Sunday is the third Sunday in Advent. The name is taken from the Introit (entrance antiphon). *Gaudete* is Latin for Rejoice! This marks the midpoint of Advent, and the priest can wear rose vestments. But it is more than that! We are also reminded about the meaning of Advent in the readings. We are reminded about the coming of the Lord and our need to prepare. Advent is a time of devout and joyful expectation.



## What are the O Antiphons?

The O Antiphons are the Magnificat (canticle) antiphons used at Vespers during the last seven days of Advent (December 17 through December 23). They are based on Isaiah. In order, the O Antiphons are: *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom), *O Adonai* (O Leader of the House of Israel), *O Radix Jesse* (O Root of Jesse), *O Clavis David* (O Key of David), *O Oriens* (O Morning Star), *O Rex Gentium* (O King of Nations), and *O Emmanuel* (God is with Us).

Super cool fact: if you look at the O Antiphons from Christmas Eve backwards and take the first letter (*Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai, Sapientia*), it spells *ero cras* in Latin, which means “I come tomorrow.”

## What are some Advent traditions?

There are many ways you can celebrate Advent. Count down the weeks with an Advent wreath. Make an Advent calendar to count the days or to help you and your family pray and do good works during Advent. Make a Jesse Tree to learn about the Bible stories from Creation to the Nativity. Read a daily devotional or gather with your family to say daily prayers.



## How can you set Advent apart from Christmas?

Wait to decorate. Put off Christmas parties and gift giving until the Christmas season. Catholics don’t just have a day for Christmas. We have a whole SEASON!

## Advent Disconnect

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The pressures of the Winter holiday season have become a powerful force, and much of the intent of the original Christmas feast day has been lost.

- **It can be a season of schedule stress.** This time of year is hectic for many: shopping and sale-chasing, holiday parties and events, and preparations for traveling or hosting.
- **It can be a season of financial stress.** Gift and travel expenses create financial pressure for many, and emotional stress around an inability to provide as much as the consumer culture suggests they should. The average U.S. holiday shopper spent \$767 on gifts last year. Some agonize over finding the “perfect gift” or at least one that measures up to the one they will receive.

- **It can be a season of over-indulgence** in spending, activity, travel, food, alcohol, and stress.
- **It can be a season of disagreement.** A British survey found that the average family had five arguments on Christmas Day.

In contrast, our Catholic tradition says that this time of year is about **quiet, attentive, expectant waiting**. It is a time to prepare for God moving into the neighborhood: emptying himself to become human so he can love us more. We worship a God who enters the world through an unwed teenage mother and is laid in an animal's feeding trough. Our culture has a funny way of celebrating this story.

## A Family Opportunity

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No one yearns for a complicated, stressful holiday season. We value family, relationships, good times together, giving to others, and our faith. But the ways we try to reach these values can instead undermine them.

We're certainly not suggesting an end to Christmas gifts. But there is a great opportunity for us as Catholics to stop and be intentional about our Advent and Christmas:

- Do our holiday activities **support the values** we want to deepen during the holiday season or work against them?
- Do we **make room** for real family time, God, and those in need at this time of year?
- Does the **holiday work**—cooking, decorating, shopping—disproportionately fall on certain family members?
- Do we **give to each other relationally**—giving in a way that connects us to each other

—or just with an obligatory purchase?

- Do we take time in Advent to pray together and really **prepare for Jesus** to come?

There is also an opportunity to embrace the rich story and sensory nature of Advent and Christmas in our tradition. Children enter through their senses:

- The **smells** of Advent wreaths and candles, and watching candles lit in the darkness
- Setting up (and perhaps playing with) an **Advent creche**
- **Cuddling up** as a family to hear stories of the long journey, shepherds, angels, magi, animals, and baby Jesus

These kinds of family experiences—along with a shared effort to live out the values of the season as a family—are the kind of faith formation that lasts a lifetime...the kind parents will pass on to their own children.