



Advent is a time of hopeful waiting and longing for the Messiah, a time of preparation, prayer, sacrifice, penance, and conversion. Since Christ has come, we are called to renew our desire for Him. Although Advent is not as rigorous as Lent, it is to be a time of penance to properly prepare for the coming of Christ. We can draw closer to Our Lord with fasting, increased prayer, acts of charity, silence, and eager anticipation.

*The Light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it. | John 1:5*

PRAYER

Attend daily Mass. The readings of Advent are filled with hope and longing for the coming of the Christ Child.

Come to spend time with Our Lord during the extended times of Eucharistic Exposition (see the bulletin for times).

Prepare the way of the Lord! Take heart to this message of Advent by receiving the sacrament of Confession.

Consider walking the Advent Season with a saint. Choose a saint from whom you can ask for daily intercessions and learn more about their faith walk.

Consider journaling for the duration of Advent. You can write prayer intentions, reflect on how God is present in your life, or simply jot down thoughts you have for him.

Join a group that comes together—virtually, or socially distanced—to focus on Advent and pray together throughout the season. The corporal prayer time will allow you to share your prayers and pray for those who are seeking Christ’s presence in their lives as well.

SCRIPTURE & LITURGY

The new liturgical year begins on November 29th.

The Liturgical Color of Advent is Purple (violet)/ Purple represents penance and preparation. Try to incorporate this color into your Advent household.

Carve out a half-hour every day for reading Scripture or spiritual reading, especially the book of Isaiah and daily Mass readings.

Beginning a week before Christmas, read together in your home from the Gospels the sections that lead up to the birth of Christ. These could include such passages as: Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 1:5-25, Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-24, Luke 1:39-45, Luke 1:46-56, and Luke 1:57-80.

SILENCE

Fast from media for three hours per day. Shut off the TV, the radio, and the computer. *Allow time for silence.*

TRADITIONS

In general, how can we bring meaning to the things we do regularly during Advent?

Make an Advent Wreath and gather at it for reading.

Observe the Feast of St. Nicholas on December 6th. Children set out their shoes the night before and awake to find them filled with treats.

Set out an empty crib representing Jesus’s manger with a container of straw. For every act of sacrifice or kindness, a child could add a piece of straw to the bed.

Learn about and use the tradition of a Jesse Tree. It tells the story of the Old Testament which led to the Messiah.

Decorate your tree with white lights, purple bows, and a few rose-colored bows until closer to Christmas. Then decorate the tree as you normally would.

Online Resources

The pandemic has kept us isolated and distanced from one another and from our parish. The internet is an important resource.

Dynamic Catholic: Let Your Soul Shine: A Free Daily Advent Experience

Search *Advent* at these sites:
Formed.org
WordOnFire.org

Books & Reading

Pick up a new missalette from the vestibule and keep it to use during Mass.

Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives by Pope Benedict XVI

The Power of Silence by Cardinal Sarah

Pick up a Magnificat Advent Companion, which are set out at the exits.

***Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.
For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:7-8***

What am I experiencing in my life, as Advent begins?

Many of us are in an ideal place to begin Advent, but we don't know it. It can be tempting to think that, because we are struggling these days, we can't enter into Advent without a big change in our mood or without distancing ourselves from our real experience. Nothing could be further from the truth. Advent is about letting God come to us. We do the letting and God does the coming. And, the whole mystery of our faith is that God is not reluctant to come into an unusual relationship (like Mary and Joseph's) or to be born in the poverty of a makeshift stable. We are tempted to prepare for Advent by cleaning everything up first – by, in effect, saving ourselves first. Our opening to Advent is to realize we need saving and to accept the saving love of our God.

So, what are we experiencing? That is the first Advent question. If we chew that question, then the Isaiah reading will sound so good to our ears. Are we the people “who walk in darkness” or have “thick clouds” over us? Is the way before us full of valleys and hills? Does it seem like we are in a desert? Are there wild beasts out there who are ready to devour us? Have we been guilty of some things we aren't proud of? Have we lost touch with who we really want to be? Has our fidelity become a bit shabby? Then, Isaiah proclaims that our God is ready to come and save us. And, none of the things that I see as barriers even matter to God.

Then, is Advent a passive season? No, we have work to do, but it is different from what we first think it is. It starts with understanding what our preparation is. If we haven't prepared our hearts to be open to asking for salvation, we'll never shout, beg, plead, “Come, Lord, Jesus!” Our work is to become who we are. Advent is a humble season, a season of self-awareness. To say it another way, before we decorate our homes for Christmas, we have to clear away some of the false masks we might wear. These made up identities help us be more “presentable” to others, and at times they even fool us. When I look in the mirror, which “me” do I see? There is nothing wrong with putting our best foot forward in public, and it is quite understandable when we want others to see our best selves. But, before our own consciences and before God, we want to be transparent and real. We want to have no illusion. If there is struggle in my life – and there has to be some struggle in all our lives – then we want to acknowledge that before our God and to let that struggle be the door into Advent's graces.

How can we have hope and expect God will come to us? The readings of Advent open up a whole series of promises, full of powerful images that keep reminding us that our God will come to save us. They free our imaginations to see and experience that coming with drama and joy – a banquet with “choice wines and rich, juicy food.” They invite us to imagine when “a time will come for singing.” They give us the opportunity to hope beyond our wildest hopes in the past – “the lion will lie down with the lamb” and “they will prepare for war no more.” They open our hearts to imagine the love of our God embracing us in the coming of one like us, who knows our life and its struggles and offers us the hope of the Spirit's presence with us every day, in every moment.

What are the key first steps to enter into Advent? We can all slow down. We can all breathe more deeply. We can all begin to trust that this will be a blessed time. Then, when we let ourselves be who we are, and hear the Scriptures, we can begin to quietly pray, “Come, Lord, Jesus.” We might expand that prayer, in quiet moments of our days ahead, “Come into my life. I trust you don't mind if it is still messy. I believe you love me, because I need your love. I don't fear you can't find the way to my heart. Come and fill me with peace and the love only you can give.” Some of us will want to open our hands on our laps or hold up our arms in the privacy of our rooms and say out loud, “Come, Lord, Jesus, come into this house, into my family, into our struggles. Come and heal us, and give us joy again. Come and unite us and let us experience, each in our own way, a bit of the joy you are offering me now.”

And, before a single decoration goes up, we have prepared for Christmas' message with the foundation of faith, with the mystery of Advent's gift. God wants to be with us. Advent is letting God's will be done in our hearts and in our everyday lives.