

# *Advent*



## *Disciples through Prayer*

**Diocese of Prince Albert  
Liturgy Office**



## Does Advent have a theme?

Advent has always been somewhat confused. It blends together a penitential spirit very similar to Lent, a liturgical theme of preparation for the Second and Final Coming of the Lord, called the Parousia, and a joyful theme of getting ready for the Bethlehem event. Religious traditions associated with Advent give expression to all these themes.

A spirit of expectation begins to pick up momentum: shopping trips, gift wrapping, parties, a different kind of music and song, and an avalanche of decoration. It is obvious that something wonderful is about to happen. In the midst of this swelling excitement throughout contemporary society and culture, worshippers in churches are reminded to be watchful, to repent, to do penance. As a preparation season... It looks forward to the annual celebration of Jesus' birth, both the historical event itself and the saving event of the coming of God in flesh.

"Catholic Customs and Traditions: a popular guide" by Greg Dues

*Why is Advent Important!* Advent begins the liturgical year for the Church. The beginnings of things usually need some advance preparation, and the liturgical year is no different. One way to approach the beginnings of the Christian life is to look at Christ himself. Advent prepares the faithful through joyful waiting and hopeful expectation for Christ's coming.

Advent begins four Sundays prior to the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas), December 25. While Advent readies us for this joyful anniversary of Christ Jesus' birth, there is more. Advent contains a double purpose. In addition to the Christmas preparations, it also prepares us for the second coming of Christ at the very end of time.

"Companion to the Calendar: Second Edition" by Liturgy Training Publications

## Blessing the Advent Wreath

(Gather together to bless your wreath, this blessing can be done with 1 or 2 leaders!)

+ All begin with the sign of the cross.

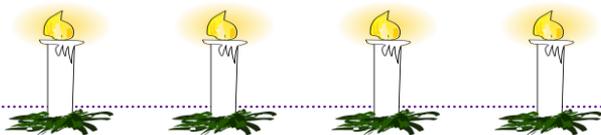
Leader: It is wintertime. Days are short and nights are long.  
We need the light of Christ. We need the warmth and joy of Christ. And so we gather around this wreath in hope.  
Bless this wreath, as a sign to us of Jesus our Light.  
The circle of this wreath reminds us of the coming of Christ, whose love for us has no end.  
Let us Bless the Lord.

Leader: By day and by night, and through every season,  
you watch over us, loving God.  
By the light of this Advent wreath we shall wait in patience for your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.  
His coming comforts our fears and brings hope to our waiting world. All glory be yours, now and for ever.

All: Amen

\*End your prayer with an Advent Song

**Why is the Advent wreath so popular?** In the 'Companion to the Calendar: Second Edition' it states: Perhaps because it is such a powerful sign of what we celebrate at Christmas. The wreath of evergreen branches reminds us that even in the darkest days of the year, there is life. And the gradually increasing light of the candles speaks of the fact that at Christmas, Christ, the true light, came into the world: "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5).



## Blessing of the Stable

To begin, have someone read the story of Christmas: found in Luke 2: 1-20 (you may split the story up between different family members).

Leader: Let us pray:

Blessed are you, Lord God, king of all creation:  
We praise you for your love.  
We thank you because you have loved us so much  
that you sent your only Son to  
bring us eternal life.  
Bless + this crib that we now prepare,  
and let it be a reminder to us of the Lord Jesus,  
Son of God and Son of Mary.  
Father, we praise you through  
Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

\*End with Silent Night or O Come all ye Faithful



### A journey towards Christ's birth!

The Nativity scene can be a great tool to show children and others the progression towards Christ being born among us. Place your empty stable in a special place and each day or once a week add pieces to the stable (this could include pieces of straw each day if there are not many pieces to your Nativity set). Finally on Christmas eve Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus could be added.

To further this journey to Jesus, the wise men could also be placed far away from the stable and have them slowly make their way and arrive when we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany (during Christmas time)!

## More Ways to Prepare for Christ`s birth

***The Jesse Tree:*** Biblical persons associated with the gradual coming of the Messiah are represented by the Advent tradition of the Jesse Tree, named after the father of David. Symbols are gradually added to the tree or branch. These symbols can be drawn, cut out, found, or purchased. They represent ancestors of Jesus, either in faith or bloodline, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesse, David, Solomon, Joseph, and Mary.

***Advent House:*** A popular variation of the Jesse Tree is the Advent, or Christmas House, usually purchased in a religious goods store. One of many windows is opened each day to display still another feature of the coming of Jesus. On December 24 the door is opened, revealing the Nativity scene.

***Advent Calendar:*** The four weeks before Christmas can be designed into a special Advent calendar of personal preparation. The days are marked with goals toward personal conversion or service to be done for others.

‘Catholic Customs and Traditions: A popular guide’ by Greg Dues

### Other Special Days during Advent

During Advent there are other special days that happen during that time. Do some exploring of these dates and feasts to see how you can celebrate them!

Dec. 6	St. Nicholas (Blessing of Tangerines)
Dec. 8	Immaculate Conception
Dec. 12	Our Lady of Guadalupe
Dec. 13	St. Lucy (Blessing of Pastries)

## ‘O Antiphons: Daily Prayers for the Week before Christmas’

An antiphon is a short passage or verse, usually from Scripture, which is prayed before and after the Psalms and canticles in the Liturgy of the Hours. In the last days of Advent, from December 17 through December 23, the antiphons for the Magnificat at Evening Prayer call upon Christ under the many names used by the prophets in the Old Testament and ask him to hasten his return. Each of these antiphons begins with ‘‘O’’ (hence their name).

‘Companion to the Calendar: Second Edition’ by Liturgy Training Publications

Here is a simple adaption of how to pray the ‘O’ Antiphons at home each day from Dec 17 – 23. Adapted from ‘Blessings and Prayers through the Year’ published by LTP.

**\*\*Light the Advent wreath, say the O Antiphon (below) and conclude with the Our Father and the appropriate verse of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.”**

*December 17 / Leader:* O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, You govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.

*December 18 / Leader:* O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him your holy law on Sinai mountain: Come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.

*December 19 / Leader:* O Flower of Jesse’s stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; the powerful stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.

*December 20 / Leader:* O Key of David, O royal power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven: Come break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and lead your captive people into freedom.

*December 21 / Leader:* O Dayspring, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

*December 22 / Leader:* O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart; O keystone of the mighty arch of humankind: Come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.

## *Meal Prayer for Advent*

Leader: Let us offer God Praise and thanksgiving.

+ All make the sign of the Cross

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation:

in the darkness and in the light,

blessed are you

in this food and in our sharing.

Blessed are you as we wait in joyful hope

for the coming of our Saviour.

Jesus Christ.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours,

now and for ever.

All:           Amen.

+ All make the sign of the cross

(This is a great opportunity to take turns being the leader of the prayer before each of the meals that your family shares together!)

