

Liturgical Living: An Intentionally Joyful Advent Season

This year, the first Sunday of Advent falls on November 30. Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for the birth of our Lord. It is a season of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. The season of Advent is like a mini Lent, which is why the liturgical color for Advent is also purple, symbolizing penance and preparation.

As Catholics, we want to celebrate Advent during Advent, and save the feasting of Christmas for the Christmas season, which is only just beginning on December 25th. This can be difficult to do in today's culture where Christmas decorations are in the stores in October, Christmas music begins in November, and on December 26th, there is no sign of Christmas left anywhere!

When you start looking, there are so many great ideas out there for celebrating the season of Advent. It is easy to become overwhelmed with planning a "perfect" Advent for your family. Avoid the urge to do it all and try to keep it simple. Make sure that what you plan is manageable, but meaningful, for your season of life.

If celebrating Advent is new for your family, an easy starting point is using a daily devotional to lead you through prayers together. Learn about Saints and feast days that fall during Advent – perhaps [Saint Nicholas](#), [the Immaculate Conception](#), [Saint Lucy](#), and [Our Lady of Guadalupe](#). Aside from that, strive for a quiet, expectant (and, hopefully, joyful) Advent.

Are you looking for some new Advent ideas to add into your domestic church? Here are a few to consider:

- Advent wreath: Place an Advent wreath in the middle of your dinner table on the first Sunday of Advent. Before dinner each night, light the appropriate candle(s) for the week and [pray a special Advent prayer](#).
- Journey to Bethlehem Nativity: Set up your manger scene with just the shepherds and animals. Since Mary and Joseph did not arrive in Bethlehem until Christmas Eve, they get placed in another area of the house. The week before Christmas, move Mary and Joseph to a closer location each day as they travel to Bethlehem, finally being placed in the manger on Christmas Eve. Similarly, the Wise Men start in an eastern location of the house, and don't join the manger scene until Epiphany.
- [Pray the St. Andrew Christmas Novena](#), also known simply as the Christmas novena. It is traditionally prayed fifteen times a day from the feast of St. Andrew (November 30) to Christmas Eve. (Also available to pray through the Hallow App.)
- Create an [Advent tree of kindness](#).

- Listen to Advent music throughout the month instead of Christmas music. (There are some great playlists online.)
- Create an Advent chain to count down the days until Christmas. Loop together strips of paper with a mix of family activities to complete and prayers to pray together. Each day, tear off one link and complete the activity/prayer. You can make your own or [use this template](#).
- [Pray the O Antiphons](#). These are prayers that are used during vespers in the last octave before Christmas (Dec 17-24). Each of the seven antiphons begins by addressing Jesus using an Old Testament title for the Messiah.
- Ave Maria Press offers a free printable family devotional for Advent [here](#).

There are a lot of great ways to slow down and celebrate during Advent. May you have a joyful and peaceful Advent!