



A GUIDE TO... *Advent*



WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent comes from the Latin word **ADVENTUS** and means **COMING** or **ARRIVAL**. It is the period of preparation in the Church that begins four Sundays before Christmas day. The first Sunday of Advent can fall anywhere between 27th November and 3rd December making the season between 22 and 28 days long.

The First Sunday of Advent 2025 is 1st December.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF ADVENT?

Christians believe that Jesus will return to us again one day and we want to be prepared for when this happens. Advent is time for us to prepare for the return of Jesus - to be ready for when he comes in glory to fully establish Heaven on earth. One Catholics do this is by preparing to celebrate his birth at Christmas. The Jewish people had waited centuries for the promised Messiah. We wait and prepare alongside Mary, Joseph and the Jewish people of the time to help us prepare for when Christ comes again.

ADVENT VS CHRISTMAS

Christmas begins on the **VIGIL** of Christmas Day (Christmas Eve) and lasts for 12 days until the 5th January. Advent is the preparation and Christmas is the celebration that comes after.

ADVENT = Christ is coming!

CHRISTMAS = Christ has come!

WHAT IS THE LITURGICAL COLOUR OF ADVENT AND WHY?

The liturgical colour for this season is **VIOLET** or **PURPLE** which is the colour of preparation and humility. The priests' vestments are purple as are three of the Advent candles on the **ADVENT WREATH**. On the third Sunday of Advent, known as **GAUDETE** Sunday, the priests wear **ROSE** or **PINK**. This also matches the third candle on the Advent Wreath. Gaudete is Latin for **REJOICE**. Rose/Pink is a combination of the Violet/Purple of Advent, and the White of Christmas reminding us to rejoice as we wait for Christ to come.

WHAT DOES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACH ABOUT ADVENT?

'When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present the ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.' (CCC 524)

Catholics are encouraged to reflect back and celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's first coming into the world (**CHRISTMAS**).

We reflect on the great mystery of the **INCARNATION** (God being born as a person). We pray in the **CREED** (the statement of belief recited at Mass) that our Lord 'will come again'. Advent is a time to reflect on whether we are ready for Christ's return and make preparations to become more ready.





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WHAT DO CATHOLICS DO DURING ADVENT?

Advent isn't done very well. By mid-November we start getting *Christmassy* - listening to Christmas music, eating Christmas food, attending Christmas parties. We can begin to celebrate Christmas before Christmas day but we should also think of ways that we can spiritually prepare.

ADVENT CALENDARS

We all love the chocolate calendars - but these can lead us to believe that Advent is only 25 days. Think of ways we can use these calendars to help us prepare for Christ's coming. Perhaps look to do an *Act of Kindness* each day of December. If you're successful you can eat the Chocolate. If not give the Chocolate to a sibling or parent.

DECORATIONS & CARDS

Many of us will decorate our homes and schools, and send Christmas cards. We should try and make sure our decorations and cards reflect the proper meaning of Christmas - **JESUS!** At the heart of our decorations should be a Nativity Crib Scene - even better if we can not add baby Jesus until Christmas night. Choose other decorations such as Christmas trees and wreaths, and cards which show scenes from the Nativity rather than images of Santa, reindeers and snowmen. Keep *Christ* in Christmas!



THE SACRAMENTS

During Advent we are asked to make a special effort to receive the **SACRAMENT of RECONCILIATION** (Confession) to help us prepare. If we were receiving a guest into our homes, we would clean and make space. Confession helps make space for Christ in our hearts.



ADVENT WREATHS

Many churches, schools and home will have Advent Wreaths. These are wreaths made from ever-green leaves that hold four candles - one for each week of Advent. Many also have a fifth white candle to be lit at Christmas. Each week has a theme:

1 HOPE, 2 PEACE, 3 JOY & 4 LOVE.

Each week when a new candle is lit, we should pray for an increase in these virtues, and for those who need them most. Advent wreaths also work well as wall displays.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED END OF AGE-PHASE OUTCOMES IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM DIRECTORY RELATED TO ADVENT?

AGES 5-7

U1.2.1

U2.2.6

AGES 7-9

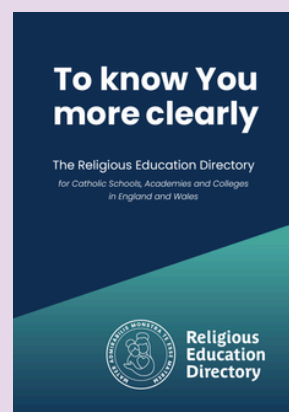
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AGES 9-11

U6.2.5





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WHAT ABOUT FATHER CHRISTMAS?

For many children (and adults) the big name at Christmas is not Jesus - it's Santa Claus! Whilst it's true that origins of Father Christmas is connected to St Nicholas, literature, film and commercialism have left these origins far behind. In the Netflix film *Christmas Chronicles* (2018), when asked for his name by a police officer, Santa answers:

"Officially, it's Saint Nicholas. I prefer Saint Nick. And I'm actually... I'm not officially an official saint. I mean, they haven't bestowed that title upon me officially."

This is completely wrong! **SAINT NICHOLAS** is an officially official Saint of the Church.

SAINT NICHOLAS

Saint Nicholas was born in Patara (modern day Turkey) in the year 270 AD. He became a priest and then bishop which is why he wears red. Legend recalls how he saved three girls from a life of slavery by dropping bags of coins through a window by night. Some say the coins were dropped down the chimney, others that the coins were placed in shoes or stockings drying by the fire. This legendary secret gift giving is what gave rise to what we now call Santa Claus. In Dutch, Saint Nicholas is known as Sinterklaas, which over time became Santa Claus.

FATHER CHRISTMAS GOES TO JAIL

St Nicholas faced persecution under the Roman Emperor Diocletian and spent time in prison. In 325 AD he attended the council of Nicea and famously punched the heretic Arius. Arius was proposing that Jesus was not fully God and man. Nicholas disagreed and literally *fought* for the true meaning of Christmas - that God became fully human in the incarnation. Nicholas was imprisoned for a while to cool off. The council of Nicea went on to produce the Nicene Creed which we still pray at Mass today, that confirms what Saint Nicholas believed to be true:

"For us men and for our salvation [God] came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

SAINT NICHOLAS DAY - 6TH DECEMBER

Saint Nicholas' feast day is 6th December which is why he is so associated with the Christmas season which emulates his spirit of generosity.



WHAT ABOUT CHRISTMAS TREES?

Christmas Trees were initiated by St Bonaventure who cut down *Thor's Oak*, a tree that people were worshipping in Germany believed to be protected by the Norsk god of lightning, Thor. Bonaventure used the evergreen tree as a symbol of Jesus' gift of eternal life, whose shape points us towards God.



PRAYER DURING... *Advent*

PRAYER IS A WONDERFUL WAY OF GETTING OUR HEARTS READY TO RECIEVE JESUS.
HERE ARE SOME PRAYERS TO TRY FOR ADVENT...



HAIL MARY

The ANNUNCIATION and VISITATION are often considered part of the *Christmas* story. Say, sing or sign this slowly and with understanding. Notice the words in the prayer which were said by the angel Gabriel (Annunciation/Luke 1:26-38) and Elizabeth (Visitation/Luke 1:39-45).

MAGNIFICAT

Say or sing Mary's song of praise and reflect on what you can give thanks for this Advent.

BENEDICTUS/ SONG OF ZECHARIAH

Reflect on the words in the song of Zechariah and the meaning of this for Zechariah and/or for you.

ANGELUS

Recite the Angelus together, thinking about Mary's 'YES' to the Angel and how you can follow her example.



ROSARY

Say a decade of the Rosary meditating on the Joyful Mysteries.

LECTIO DIVINA

Meditate on the Sunday or daily readings during Advent. Become aware of which words or phrases are meaningful to you?

O ANTIPHONS

Sing, chant or recite the O Antiphons on the last seven days of Advent. Listen to the song 'O Come O Come Emmanuel' and reflect on Jesus' coming.

VISIO DIVINA

Like Lectio Divina but reflecting on a piece of Advent or Christmas art. Think about the people in the scene. What are they thinking or feeling? What is God saying to you?

SAY SORRY

If you cannot go to Confession or have a penitential service during Advent, examine your conscience and say sorry to God for the times when you have not shown love.



An Activity for Advent

ADVENT POSADA/TRAVELLING CRIB WREATHS

The Posada is an Advent tradition from Mexico. Many schools now call it a *Travelling Crib*. These are simple sets including Mary, Joseph, a donkey and a copy of the Christmas story. The word *posada* means inn and helps us remember that Mary and Joseph needed places to stay on their journey to Bethlehem. Families are encouraged to sit together and read the story. Some include a journal of pray that families can add to as well.





RESOURCES FOR... *Advent*



Videos about Advent



A child-friendly video about Advent from Twinkl:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfN7ucvUx4s>



A video for staff to have a better understanding of Advent by Fr Mike Schmitz:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WD357YYDk1A>



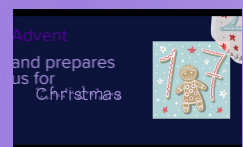
This song can be used each week as you light the next candle on your Advent wreath.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICfpDyrfPkO>



Busted Halo's 2 minute video guide to Advent:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCOFGQLBp7w>



Websites about Advent



Loyola Press offer lots of Advent information and resources. Highlights include Advent Calendars, craft activities, books and other sources of inspiration.



<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/advent/>

CAFOD regularly update their resources for specific initiatives. Their Advent resources for classroom activities and assemblies link to Catholic Social Teaching.



<https://cafod.org.uk/education/primary-teaching-resources/advent-for-children>

The JESSE TREE is a popular activity to learn about the Messianic prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. Catholic Icing explain this activity and many other activities.



<https://www.catholicicing.com/advent-and-christmas-with-kid/>

7 Advent Traditions for children and families including Advent calendars, wreaths and ST ANDREW'S NOVENA which starts on 30th November.



<https://catholicallyear.com/blog/seven-catholic-advent-traditions-and-which-ones-will-work-for-your-family/>