

December - Advent



Advent is the first season in the Christian liturgical calendar, observed on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, and during the weeks that follow them. It serves as a period of preparation and anticipation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

More than just a countdown to Christmas, Advent calls believers to reflect on both the first coming of Christ in Bethlehem and his second coming at the end of time. This dual focus makes Advent a spiritually rich season, urging Christians to not only prepare their homes for Christmas, but also hearts, minds, and lives for the arrival of Christ.

The Meaning of Advent

The word "Advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming" or "arrival." In the Christian context, this term refers to both the historical event of Christ's birth and the eschatological event

of his return. This twofold aspect gives Advent its unique character: it is both a time to celebrate the past and to look forward to the future.

In the early Church, Advent was primarily associated with the anticipation of Christ's second coming. Over time, it evolved into a season that also focuses on preparing for Christmas, the celebration of Christ's first coming. Therefore, Advent is a season that encourages reflection on God's promises, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the ongoing work of Christ in the world.

Theme of Advent

The liturgical colour of Advent is purple, which reflects a penitential character. It is similar to Lent, but a more rosy purple to reflect the more hopeful character of the season. Unlike Lent, Advent is a season of joyful expectation. As we prepare our homes for Christmas, we also need prepare our souls for Christ. As we travel through the weeks leading to the Christmas season, we should make use of the opportunities our parishes provide us for reconciliation and to come to know Christ on a deeper level.

Focusing On Preparation

It's so easy to get caught up in the way the world sees Christmas. As Christians, we know that Christmas is about Jesus. One of the best ways to keep the focus on Christ is to keep the season of Advent as one of anticipation, and the season of Christmas as one of celebration.

During Advent, the wreath focuses us on anticipation. Each Sunday a new candle is lit and the light increases. We begin with the purple candle across from the rose candle, and proceed clockwise. The stories of people awaiting the Messiah begin to fill our minds and hearts as we listen to the readings at Church. Families should come together around the wreath each day (supper is a good time) to pray. It's a daily refocusing on the reason why we are getting so excited for the coming Christmas season; it's all about Jesus.

The third Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete Sunday*, is a celebration of rejoicing in that God will fulfill the promises that people have hoped and longed for. What a great time for changing the decor from Advent to Christmas in the home, beginning that shift from Advent to Christmas. Lighting up the tree, bringing the presents wrapped under the tree, singing carols that speak to the coming of our Lord. By focusing on the anticipation, focusing on preparing, it makes the season that follows all the sweeter.