

Please keep this and refer back to it throughout the entire Advent and Christmas Season.



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Entering Deeply into the Life of the Church: Advent - Epiphany Feast Days and Solemnities

This is a compilation of various Feast Days and Solemnities that occur during Advent and Christmas. The most important part of these seasons is focusing on the coming of Christ and prayerfully enter into this time of anticipation (Advent) and celebration (Christmas). Don't overwhelm yourself and try to do everything, but rather, choose a few things that will help you enter more deeply into the Advent and Christmas seasons.

- November 27** **First Sunday of Advent - "Hope"**
Pray the Blessing of your Advent wreath and light the first candle each day this week (see *Advent Wreath Blessings* and *Prayers when Lighting Advent Wreath* on the last page). Start Jesse Tree (see calendar for daily Scripture passages). Try to enter into the season of anticipation by waiting to celebrate Christmas.
- November 30** **Feast of St. Andrew**
Today starts the St. Andrew Novena. Say the following prayer 15 times each day from today until Christmas Eve for a specific intention: *Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born Of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold. In that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and of His blessed Mother. Amen.*
- December 3** **Memorial of St. Francis Xavier**
St. Francis Xavier is the Patron Saint of China and missionaries. Today, ask for his intercession and pray for all missionaries and Catholics who are being persecuted in China.
- December 4** **Second Sunday of Advent - "Peace"**
Light the second candle on your Advent wreath. Light the first two candles each day this week.
- December 6** **Memorial of St. Nicholas**
Before bed on December 5, set out your shoes for St. Nicholas! Traditionally, he will leave gifts of candy canes, coins, clementine's, holy cards, or anything else that is small enough to fit in your shoe. Listen to episode 48 of Saint Stories for Kids by Shining Light Dolls on St. Nicholas! In imitation of St. Nicholas's generous spirit, collect clothing, toys, and household items to give to the poor and needy.
- December 7** **Memorial of St. Ambrose**
St. Ambrose is the Patron Saint of bees, beekeepers, and candlemakers. In honor of him, in one meal today, make a dish or dessert that includes honey and, as you finish your meal, light a candle and say the Penitential Prayer of St. Ambrose: *O Lord, who hast mercy upon all, take away from me my sins, and mercifully kindle in me the fire of the Holy Spirit. Take away from me the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh, a heart to love and adore Thee, a heart to delight in Thee, to follow and enjoy Thee for Christ's sake. Amen.*
- December 8** **Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception**
Go to Mass! Pray the Rosary with your family, friends, or get to Mass early and pray it with your parish.



- December 11** **Third Sunday of Advent - "Joy"**
Light the third candle (the pink one) on your Advent Wreath. Light the first three candles each day this week.
- December 12** **Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe**
Pray the Rosary. Have your favorite Mexican meal for supper.
- December 13** **Memorial of St. Lucy**
"Lucy" means "light." Consider waiting to turn on your Christmas lights until today in honor of this Saint. Go for a drive and admire Christmas lights.
- December 17** Start of the "O Antiphons." At the end of the prayer when lighting your Advent wreath today, pray: *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** **Fourth Sunday of Advent - "Love"**
Light the final candle on your Advent Wreath. Light all four candles each day this week. At the end of the prayer when lighting your Advent wreath today, pray: *O sacred Lord of Ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.*
- December 19** At the end of the prayer when lighting your Advent wreath today, pray: *O Flower of Jesse's stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kinds 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** At the end of the prayer when lighting your Advent wreath today, pray: *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** At the end of the prayer when lighting your Advent wreath today, pray: *O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.*
- December 22** At the end of the prayer when lighting your Advent wreath today, pray: *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.*
- December 23** At the end of the prayer when lighting your Advent wreath today, pray: *O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.*
- December 24** **Christmas Eve**
Consider going to Christmas Eve Mass. Get the last few chores and prep done around the house so you can spend the 12 Days of Christmas celebrating the birth of Christ rather than trying to finish your to do list. Consider waiting until today to open Christmas cards, decorate your tree, putting up Christmas decorations, etc.



December 25

Christmas Day

Merry Christmas!! If you didn't go last night (or even if you did) go to Mass this morning. To celebrate the birth of Christ, make a birthday cake for Jesus and sing "Happy Birthday." Break out the Christmas cookies, listen to Christmas music, spend time with family and friends, and spend some time reflecting on the Incarnation, the reality that God became man out of love for you. Go to our webpage www.tworiverscatholic.com/advent and listen to the "The Gift," a homily by Fr. John Riccardo on what we are celebrating today.

December 26

Feast of St. Stephen

St. Stephen was the first martyr. Today, pray for those all over the world who are facing persecution and martyrdom for their faith, that they, like St. Stephen, would have the courage to persevere to the end.

December 27

Feast of St. John

Before being called to be one of Jesus' disciples, St. John was a fisherman. He also survived two different martyrdom attempts, being boiled alive in oil as well as drinking poisoned wine. In his honor, have a meal of fish, something deep fried, or have a glass of wine or grape juice. Today is also a day to honor priests. Say a prayer for your priest and make sure he knows how grateful you are for him.

December 28

Feast of the Holy Innocents

Today we honor the young boys who were killed by King Herod after he learns from the Wise Men that the King of the Jews was born in Bethlehem. As we remember these children who lost their lives, pray for an end to abortion.

December 30

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph

Pray as a family today. Spend some time reflecting on what being a Catholic family means and how your family can grow in holiness together. Have a special outing or evening as a family; you could consider inviting other families, those whose families aren't in the area, or those who have lost loved ones to join you.

January 1

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Pray the Rosary. Ask Jesus how he wants you to grow closer to him in this New Year. Some ideas: Praying a daily Rosary, praying a daily Divine Mercy Chaplet, reading through the Gospels, praying with Scripture every day, going to daily Mass once a week, join a Bible Study, join Men's or Women's group, pray daily with your spouse or children, choose something to fast from for the whole year, or listen to the Catechism in a Year with Fr. Mike Schmitz.

January 8

Epiphany of the Lord

As a household, bless your house by using blessed chalk to mark the lintel of your door with 20 + C + M + B + 23 while saying:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star of God's Son who became human two thousand and twenty three years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the new year. Amen.

Visit, O blessed LORD, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live or visit here with the gift of your love; and grant that we may manifest your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen. *Christus mansionem benedicat.* (May Christ bless this house)



Blessing of the Advent Wreath

All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:
Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Response (R/.) **Who made heaven and earth.**

A reading from the prophet Isaiah:

**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.**

Reader: **The Word of the Lord.**

R/. Thanks be to God.

With hands joined, the leader says:

**Lord our God,
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:
he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,
he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,
he is the Savior of every nation.
Lord God,
let your blessing come upon us
as we light the candles of this wreath.
May the wreath and its light
be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.
May he come quickly and not delay.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

R/. Amen.

The first candle is then lighted. The blessing may conclude with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

**O come, desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of humankind;
bid ev'ry sad division cease
and be thyself our Prince of peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Prayer when Lighting the Advent Wreath

Advent candles may be lighted as the leader says:

**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 wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior,
Jesus Christ.**

**R/. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and
for ever**

The leader says:

Come, Lord Jesus!

R/. Come quickly!