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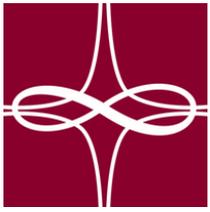
# An Introduction to Advent

## *A Season of Active Waiting*



A guide to  
introduce you to  
the Liturgical  
Season of  
Advent and how  
to make the  
most of this  
season





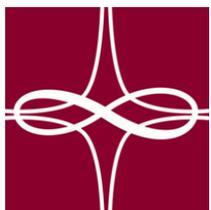
# Advent: A New Liturgical Year

The Church celebrates a new year on the first Sunday of Advent, celebrating the end of the liturgical year the previous Sunday with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (more commonly known as the Feast of Christ the King). This Solemnity celebrates the omnipotence and transcendence of God throughout history. The Church then enters the season of Advent, a period of active waiting and anticipation for Christmas and celebrating the Lord's Incarnation.



Much of the structure and content of the Advent liturgies guide the faithful to understand the preparations God the Father took for the Incarnation. The Catechism explains that "He [God the Father] makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the 'First Covenant.' He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming" (CCC 522). Advent celebrates the past, present, and future of the Church. We remember our Jewish heritage and traditions, contemplate the Incarnation of Jesus as the Messiah, and prepare for the second coming as Christians.





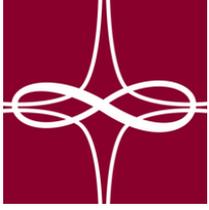
# What is Advent?

## An Anticipatory Season

Many describe Advent as a period of patient, but active, waiting on the Lord. Our waiting as Christians, however, differs from the Jewish anticipation from of the Messiah. While Jewish people around the world continue to await the first manifestation of the Messiah, the Christ, we await "the coming (or the return) of the Messiah . . . who died and rose from the dead and is recognized as Lord and Son of God" (CCC 840). The Catholic anticipation of Christmas celebrates Christ's human presence on earth during his life and ministry, honors his persistent physical presence in the Eucharist, and reminds us to be mindful of the second coming and to be watchful for the Lord's arrival.



This guide is organized into four sections of virtues that traditionally correspond to each week of Advent and their respective Advent wreath candles. This guide will help you understand the liturgical season as well as how to grow in relationship with Christ through reflection on Sacred scripture and how Jesus calls us deeper as we prepare to celebrate his birth.



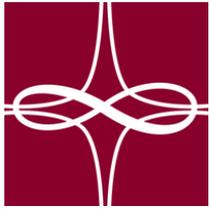
# Week I: Hope

The first week of Advent is centered around the virtue of hope. This theological virtue is incredibly integral to the Christian life, but it can be incredibly complex. Day to day, we are hopeful for anything from our favorite sports team to win a game to a promotion at work. Hope in our faith lives, however, goes deeper. We hope in Jesus himself, that he rose from the dead and will return in the second coming, and although they are already assured, we still hope in God's love, mercy, and graces to be poured out on us each day.

In Advent, we hope for the normal spiritual graces, but we also hope for Christ's coming at Christmas and at the second coming. We enter into the past like our Jewish ancestors who await the coming of the Messiah. We, as Christians, await the Messiah's arrival at Christmas. But knowing the end of Christ's earthy life and what is promised in eternal life, we pray for the strength and the grace to live upright lives in the hope of the Second coming and the resurrection of the dead: Christ's ultimate and promised victory.

As the Catechism explains: "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming."



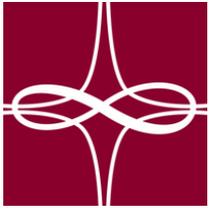


# Week I: Hope - Continued

By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: 'He must increase, but I must decrease'" (CCC 524). The precursor discussed here is St. John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus and the last Old Testament prophet. The Catechism explains "John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last. He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being 'the friend of the bridegroom,' whom he points out as 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.' Going before Jesus 'in the spirit and power of Elijah,' John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom" (CCC, 523).



In other words, John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets who called Israel to repentance and sought to prepare the people for Christ's mission and personal call to follow him in a totally new way. John the Baptist's call to a radical new way of life, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel", is meant to disorganize and reorient one's life, and Jesus follows John in order to help us become better believers as God intends.

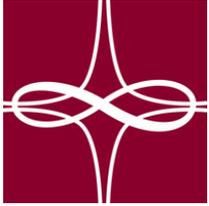


# Week I: Hope - Continued



This week of Advent, place yourself in the grand scheme of salvation history, reflect on what God's promise to send his son means for your life and how we can prepare for Christ's return at the second coming. Place your hope in the Lord, and trust his divine plan. We invite you to pray about the virtue of hope with these scripture passages and accompanying reflection questions:

- Isaiah 40:3-5
  - Think about John the Baptist as the voice calling out in the desert, in what ways do you exude hope or want to exude hope in your daily life?
- Luke 21:25-28, 34-36
  - Are you caught up on daily anxieties and earthy pleasures, or do you use spiritual life to help alleviate your fears and keep you focused on salvation with Christ?
- Romans 5:1-11
  - Do you see hope in our spiritual life for our own redemption and deeper conversion to Christ? Do we ask the Holy Spirit to give us the virtue of hope?



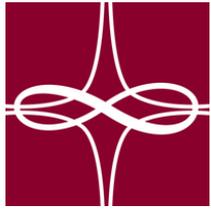
## Week II: Faith

The Second Week of Advent is focused on the virtue of faith. Faith is another integral aspect of the Christian life which directs our thoughts and actions to ourselves, others, and God. Our faith in God informs how we live in right-relationship with him and those around us. As explained in the Letter to the Hebrews "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. Because of it the ancients were well attested. By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible" (Hebrews 11:1-3).

Faith is a combination of our belief in him, our willing assent to his ways, and commitment to live as he calls us even when we cannot see or hear him. Faith, while rational, is inspired and placed within us by God the Father in order to know, understand, and love him through Jesus. As the Catechism explains, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: to be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit. He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us.

By virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith, the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son. Baptism gives us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit.





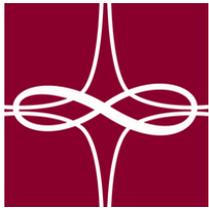
## Week II: Faith - Continued

For those who bear God's Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son presents them to the Father, and the Father confers incorruptibility on them. And it is impossible to see God's Son without the Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son, for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of God's Son is obtained through the Holy Spirit" (CCC 683). The second week of the Advent season calls us deeper into the Love of God through a contemplation on faith.

The Incarnation of Christ is one of God's ultimate ways of expressing his infinite love for humanity, and faith allows us to understand this divine mystery. God wants to fully understand us, and for us to understand him, through the person of Jesus Christ, and faith leads us to see that God loves us beyond measure and will offer his Son for our love.

Pope Francis explains this loving expression during Advent saying "This is also the first message of Advent and the liturgical year: we need to recognize God's closeness and to say to him: 'Come close to us once more!' God wants to draw close to us, but he will not impose himself; it is up to us to keep saying to him: 'Come!' This is our Advent prayer: 'Come!' Advent reminds us that Jesus came among us and will come again at the end of time. Yet we can ask what those two comings mean, if he does not also come into our lives today? So let us invite him. Let us make our own the traditional Advent prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus."--Pope Francis Homily First Sunday of Advent, 29 November 2020.





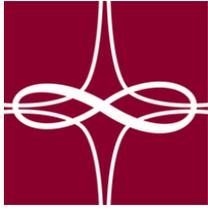
## Week II: Faith - Continued

Throughout Advent, we are invited to come closer to Christ and others through expressions of love that are rooted in faith. It is through this loving witness that Christ calls us to go forth preaching the Gospel. The Catechism explains "No one - no individual and no community - can proclaim the Gospel to himself: 'Faith comes from what is heard.' No one can give himself the mandate and the mission to proclaim the Gospel. The one sent by the Lord does not speak and act on his own authority, but by virtue of Christ's authority; not as a member of the community, but speaking to it in the name of Christ. No one can bestow grace on himself; it must be given and offered" (CCC 875).



We invite you to pray about the virtue of faith with these scripture passages and accompanying reflection questions:

- Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
  - Do we shout out from the mountaintop to others like the reading asks?  
Does this come from a place of faith or just lukewarm belief?
- 2 Peter 3:8-14
  - Does our faith shape our life and inform our trust in Jesus as our Savior?
- Mark 1:1-8
  - Do we model John the Baptist in "decreasing" and not being selfish to allow the Lord to do his work and make us better?



## Week III: Joy

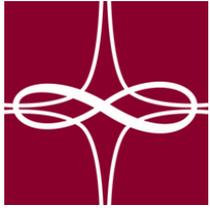
The Third Week of Advent begins with Gaudete (Joyful) Sunday, and this week is focused on the joy of the Christian life. Since Advent is a penitential season, akin to a "mini" Lent, the Church celebrates a day of joy and hope as we draw closer to the end of Advent and the arrival of Christmas, the Nativity of Our Lord. The most noticeable shift in liturgy on Gaudete Sunday is the use of rose-colored vestments, which are only used on a handful of feast days or Solemnities.

Gaudete Sunday celebrates the joy we as Christians feel as we contemplate the hope of the Savior with the gift of Christ's Incarnation. The first two weeks of Advent centered on hope and love must be seen and understood in order to realize the full depth of the third week of Advent and Gaudete Sunday. Our joy results from both our hope in the Lord and our love for him.

The Vatican Liturgical Commission states "Our reason for hope is intimately tied to our waiting, which is characteristic of the liturgy of the Third Sunday: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near" (Phil 4,4-5)(3).

It is Christ himself who is the subject of Christian hope, the mystery hidden in time and now revealed: 'Christ among you, your hope of glory' (Col 1, 27)" (Journeying Through the Liturgical Year). The joy that stems from meditating on the saving action behind the Incarnation of Christ is enough to make anyone excited and grateful for a loving God!





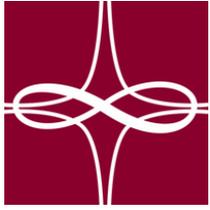
## Week III: Joy - Continued

We are incredibly blessed to be able to experience Christ's presence in our day to day life, and his presence is even more manifested at Mass and in the Eucharist. Even under the form of bread and wine, Jesus knows our human tendencies and relates to us, and he asks us to relate to him. The joy we feel from coming to know Christ more should also affect our day to day actions.



We must be joyful whether we are at the grocery store, the gym, with friends and family, and even driving; the joy of the Gospel and Jesus's life must penetrate all parts of our life. Pope Francis explains how Christians should be witnesses of joy saying, "consequently, an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that 'delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ'" (Evangelli Gaudium, 10).

The virtues of Advent are connected, leading into each other, and slowly helping the faithful better understand Jesus and the mission we are called to be a part of.



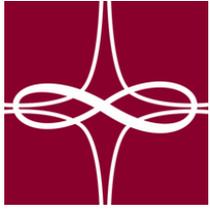
## Week III: Joy - Continued

Part of living a joy-filled life in light of the Gospels is recognizing the presence of Christ in one's day-to-day life. By being mindful of his presence, we are more able to witness to the hope and love of Christ and become better disciples along the road of life.



We invite you to pray about the virtue of joy with these scripture passages and accompanying reflection questions

- Isaiah 9:2-6
  - Do we allow Christ to give us joy and to take away our burdens, or do we dwell on them, not allowing him to heal us?
- Zephaniah 3:14-18
  - When we are in prayer, do you try to talk to and listen to Jesus? If not, try it.
- Luke 3:10-18
  - Reflect on what your baptismal call means, and examine how you live it out in your day to day life.

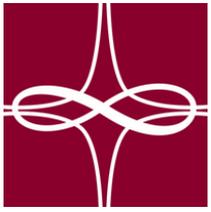


## Week IV: Peace

The fourth and final week of Advent is focused on the virtue of peace. The peace talked about in this final week of Advent relates to Jesus' title as the Prince of Peace who ushers in a new way of existence. Peace in the spiritual life relates to both the inner peace we receive from God through grace and the sacraments as well as the peace that will come to the world at the second coming.

An integral aspect of contemplating peace in Advent is how we receive Christ's peace in our own lives. The Catechism explains: "By this power of the Spirit, God's children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear 'the fruit of the Spirit: . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.' 'We live by the Spirit'; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we 'walk by the Spirit.' Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God 'Father' and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory"(CCC 736).





## Week IV: Peace - Continued

Daily we are offered the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and peace is a grace many of us could use as we are bombarded with the stressors of work and life. By slowing down, reaching out to God, and placing one's self in quiet moments with the Lord, one can truly live in Christ's peace each day. As the Advent season draws to an end, one should think about how hope, faith, and joy can lead one deeper into Christ's peace which is most present when Christ is physically present. This presence is perfectly symbolized in the upcoming Christmas celebrations, but Christ's presence is experienced at any Mass or in any Catholic Church. The Eucharist is the best dispenser of these graces, and we need only reach out to secure them.



We invite you to pray about the virtue of peace with these scripture passages and accompanying reflection questions:

- Micah 5:1-4a
  - Do we place ourselves in Christ's peace voluntarily? Or does he find us?
- Hebrews 10:5-10
  - Think of ways that you can model Christ's sacrifice in your life like doing the chores of someone in your family, buying coffee for a friend, taking extra time to listen, and being patient with someone, etc.
- Luke 1:39-45
  - Do we model Mary in believing and trusting in God's will for our lives?

**For additional resources, please visit  
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