

# Advent Ideas & Resources

Advent is the Liturgical Season of the Church in which we are preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ. Advent comes from the Latin, *ad venio*, which means to come. *Adventus Domini* means the coming of the Lord. During Advent we are waiting the coming of Christ in three different ways: in the past- as a baby born so long ago in a stable, in the present- through grace and specifically the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and in the future- as our King and our Judge at the end of time.

Advent marks the beginning of the new Liturgical Year (happy New Year to the Church!) There are four Sundays in Advent, although usually it is not four full weeks. Colors associated with Advent are violet and rose (used on *Gaudete Sunday*- the third Sunday of Advent. *Gaudete* is Latin for rejoice).

The Church is rooted in scripture and rich in tradition! I'd like to share some of the traditions our family has enjoyed over the years as we celebrate this holy season! I love to encourage others to choose ONE activity to add to what you are already doing with your family for Advent. For example, if you have an Advent Wreath that you use every year try also making a Jesse Tree this year. I have found that if I do too much at one time I get overwhelmed and end up not following through with my plans.

Here are some ideas we have used in the Bereit home:

1. **Advent Wreath**- We use the book *Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany in The Domestic Church* by Catherine and Peter Fournier <http://amzn.to/TOdMl0> This book has a different prayer for each week of Advent. Every night at dinner we light the appropriate candle/candles and say the prayer for that week of Advent. We light the candle/candles before we eat and blow out the candle/candles when we finish dinner. The Advent Wreath is rich in liturgical symbolism and connects us as the Domestic Church with The Church as children will see the Advent Wreath lit in Mass on Sundays and see it again in their own homes!!
2. **Advent Prayer**- As a family we made our own Advent Prayer! The children were the main contributors! After we wrote it, each child typed it and then illustrated our prayer. We say our prayer daily. One year the children wrote, "Dear Jesus, Please help us to prepare our hearts for your coming at Christmas time and for your Second Coming. Thank you for all the opportunities we experienced this year. Thank you for all animals, especially those who kept you warm the day of your birth. Amen.
3. **Advent Calendar**- This is a fun way to count down to Christmas! We first read the book, *Waiting for Christmas: A Story about the Advent Calendar*: <http://amzn.to/RFrypQ> We have some favorite calendars we use! Fontanini's

magnetic Advent Calendar Set is awesome!!! It is assembled on our refrigerator. Every day you add a piece to the manger scene until at the end of Advent it is completed. The kids love the magnets! Here it is: <http://bit.ly/StsvGo> We also love the *Advent Calendar* by Tony Wolf with 24 mini books. We put these books on a little Christmas tree after we read each one daily. Here it is: <http://amzn.to/QgBppe> We love this calendar!!! We also use the calendars with a chocolate in each window and that is so fun!

4. **Jesse Tree**- We again use the book, *Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany in the Domestic Church*. We created our symbols found in the book and wrote the Bible verses that correspond to each symbol on the handmade ornament. We read the scripture verses every night after supper and then hang the symbol (we drew and colored each symbol on a circle ornament cut out of card stock and decorated with glitter) on our tree. Our tree is a small Christmas tree bought at Wal-Mart. We hang the ornaments on the bottom of the tree in a circle and then layer it until Week 4 ornaments are on top. I love the scripture readings because we are reading Salvation History! It also reminds me of how St. Therese and her family would read the Gospel every night together after dinner. You can do a Jesse Tree many ways! A book that is very helpful to read to your children is *The Jesse Tree* and can be found here: <http://amzn.to/UsuFjn>
5. **Nativity Set**- The children have enjoyed setting out the manger at the beginning of Advent without Baby Jesus and putting straw in it when they make a sacrifice or perform an act of kindness. At the end of Advent the idea is that Baby Jesus will have a soft place to lay his head. We also move the characters in the set around so that they are processing towards the stable. I have found Mary and Joseph on the stairs during many an Advent morning as they travel to Bethlehem! On Christmas Eve night we turn off all the lights in the house and take Baby Jesus (with lit candles) and place him in the manger. We sing Silent Night as we process from upstairs down to our living room. On Christmas morning we read from Luke's Gospel about the Birth of our Lord before opening presents. (We also bought a very durable Nativity Set from Fontanini- they have held up very well over the years.)
6. **The O Antiphons**- This is one of my personal favorite traditions! You can read about the O Antiphons at <http://bit.ly/5rfYiJ> I highly encourage you to read this article! It is fabulous!!! Fr. Saunders explains it much better than I ever could! It is so cool!! When I first learned about the O Antiphons Claire was two years old. I was so excited! I had a Holy Spirit moment and decided that we would make the O Antiphons on paper plates. There are seven O Antiphons (to be recited or chanted on Dec. 17-23), so we took seven paper plates and drew and colored the seven symbols on each one with the Title of the Messiah above the symbol (for example Dec. 22nd is O Rex Gentium (O King of Nations) and we drew a King's Crown). I again used the book, *Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany in the Domestic Church* as my reference for the symbols and titles. We then punched a hole on the top of each one and strung yarn through it. Next we hung each one on our kitchen window (I just taped it to the window) and turned the paper plates

facing outside. Every day we turned over the appropriate plate. We then recited the prayer that goes with each title. You could sing it! We have been doing this for twelve years in our home and my children take turns turning around the plate! They love it and so do I! Two years ago we made new O Antiphons (complete with gold poster board and glitter)! The first Advent we made and prayed the O Antiphons I remember walking into our church in Texas and there they were- our priest had beautiful banners made of them and they were hanging in our church. He then proceeded to explain the O Antiphons in Mass that day! Wow- again we are the Domestic Church!!! I love it! I remember that day thanking God for that little unexpected gift!!!!

I also wanted to also share some **favorite books** to read during Advent with your children!

For younger children, ages 4-8 these are three of our favorites:

- *Who Is Coming to Our House?* <http://amzn.to/RWDIfp>
- *Room for a Little One* <http://amzn.to/QJy8yv>
- *The Stable Where Jesus Was Born* <http://amzn.to/TOgkQO>

To celebrate the **Feast of St. Nicholas** we like these books:

- *The Miracle of St. Nicholas* (probably for 8 years old and up) <http://amzn.to/RWDUey>
- *The Legend of Saint Nicholas* <http://amzn.to/SYsu80>
- *The Baker's Dozen: A Saint Nicholas Tale* <http://amzn.to/SPwsiE>
- *St. Nicholas The Wonder Worker* (for middle school children) <http://amzn.to/QJyDbW>

For the **Feast of the Immaculate Conception** and **Our Lady of Guadalupe** we read:

- *Mary the Mother of Jesus* <http://amzn.to/Stv6K7>
- *Mary* <http://amzn.to/ZC68hN>
- *The Lady of Guadalupe* <http://amzn.to/Stvmsu>

Books by **Tomie dePaola** that are wonderful to read during Advent include (ages 6-10):

- *Country Angel Christmas* (another good one to read around the Feast of St. Nicholas) <http://amzn.to/T3PswF>
- *The Clown of God* <http://amzn.to/StwxrT>
- *The Night of Las Posadas* <http://amzn.to/UIVC2E>
- *The Legend of the Poinsettia* <http://amzn.to/StwMDg>
- *The Legend of Old Befana* <http://amzn.to/Xdyj8d>

Books to celebrate **Christmas around the world** that we love are:

- *Christmas Around the World* <http://amzn.to/S0MgQQ>
- *Christmas Around the World: A Pop-Up Book* <http://amzn.to/TOlhsd>

These are books by **Inos Biffi** that I use often. The art is spectacular! **Franco Vignazia** is the illustrator- he is an amazing Italian artist!

- *An Introduction To The Liturgical Year* <http://amzn.to/WbgqFD>
- *The Way to Bethlehem* <http://amzn.to/PWXfwo>
- *An Illustrated Catechism* <http://amzn.to/QJAK9e>

Here are some other favorites we read **during Advent** (these are for ages 6 and up):

- *A Gift from Saint Francis: The First Creche* <http://amzn.to/XJAxeI>
- *The Donkey's Dream* <http://amzn.to/RWFZqY>
- *The Last Straw* (great for adults too) <http://amzn.to/ZCaIfX>
- *The Legend of the Christmas Rose* <http://amzn.to/UsxiSi>
- *The Race of The Birkebeiners* (one of our favorite books ever!!!) <http://amzn.to/UIWpAv>
- *The Crippled Lamb* <http://amzn.to/XdzZ1F>
- *One Wintry Night* (illustrations are absolutely gorgeous) <http://amzn.to/UIWx2Y>

For children in **middle school and high school** I would suggest the following (or you could do some of these as read-alouds for the entire family):

- *The Christmas Tree* (we read this aloud- one of our favorites) <http://amzn.to/XdAfgV>
- *The Christmas Mystery* (we read this aloud- one of our favorites) <http://amzn.to/U2bMrm>
- *The Gift of the Magi* <http://amzn.to/SPyNKE>
- *The Story of the Other Wise Man* <http://amzn.to/RWGuRM>
- *A Christmas Carol* <http://amzn.to/SPySOX>

There are some **audio CDs** I would also suggest for Advent (actually anything by Jim Weiss is awesome and all the Classical Kids CDs are amazing):

- *A Christmas Carol and Other Favorites* (those include The Gift of the Magi and Dick Spindler's Family Christmas) by Jim Weiss <http://amzn.to/PWXUOG>
- *A Classical Kids Christmas* <http://amzn.to/PWXZSj>
- *Tchaikovsky Discovers America* (Nutcracker Music and other compositions) <http://amzn.to/18E0VrM>

- *Hallelujah Handel* (great for both Christmas and Easter) <http://amzn.to/ZSgbOT>

There are some beautiful **feast days** to celebrate during Advent. This is an excellent resource:

- <http://bit.ly/Usygd>

These are some of the **feast days we celebrate** in our home:

- **Dec. 6- The Feast Day of St. Nicholas.** <http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/home/> is so much fun for children! We celebrate it every year! At the site above you can find all kinds of goodies! I bought the St. Nicholas cookie cutters from the St. Nicholas Center and we make the traditional St. Nicholas gingerbread cookies. We also of course celebrate by having some little gifts (gold chocolate coins, etc.) that can be found in their stockings hung by the fireplace. The kids can't wait to get up and peer inside their stockings! We say a prayer asking St. Nicholas to inspire us to be as generous as he was and we thank him for his holy example!
- **Dec. 8- The Feast of the Immaculate Conception.** We attend Mass. We have also in the past "adopted a new mother" through a crisis pregnancy center in Texas and brought her gifts she needed for her newborn baby. One year, we got to visit one of these moms in the hospital right after she had her baby, which just happened to be born on Dec. 8th! It was so perfect! The kids loved it and we kept her in our prayers! I also know families that will have only white foods to eat at dinner (white rice, chicken with Alfredo sauce, New England clam chowder, etc.) in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her special day! A website that is excellent for this is: <http://bit.ly/sJzMqH>
- **Dec. 12- The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.** We had a fiesta one year complete with Mexican Food and a beautiful prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe! We invited several families and had so much fun! Local Mexican restaurants were very generous and donated gift cards for our feast day celebration. We placed all of the names of our guests in a sombrero and had a guest (small child) randomly select a name out of the sombrero. Whoever was chosen received a gift card. We had quite a few gift cards- it was fun! We have a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe and we sang "Immaculate Mary." We also asked each family to bring diapers or wipes and we donated those to the local crisis pregnancy shelter. Catholic Cuisine has some great ideas for food for this wonderful feast day: <http://bit.ly/sJzMqH>

Here are some beautiful **prayers to Our Lady of Guadalupe**:

- <http://www.liturgies.net/saints/mary/guadalupe/prayers.htm>

Other **web sites** that are helpful during this beautiful liturgical season are:

- <http://catholicicing.com>
- <http://www.elizabethfoss.com/reallarning/advent-and-christmas-with.html>
- <http://showerofroses.blogspot.com>
- <http://tiredtwang.blogspot.com/p/catholic-coloring-pages.html> (great coloring pages for little children and this is my very talented cousin)
- <http://dc.about.com/od/concerts/a/HolidayConcerts.htm> (For those of you in the Washington D.C. Area)
- <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2012-11-15>
- <http://www.elizabethfoss.com/serendipity/2010/11/christmas-and-advent-around-the-world.html> (very helpful- I like the way she organizes her books suggestions and ideas)
- <http://4real.thenetsmith.com> (very helpful- so much good stuff) Our friends in Texas administer this discussion forum and they do an amazing job!
- <http://www.ltp.org> (great for purchasing a Liturgical Calendar)
- <http://bit.ly/QJCbuU> (these passports would be great to use if you are doing a Christmas Around the World Unit)

Hope you have a very peaceful and holy Advent! How blessed we are to be part of the Catholic Church, which is rooted in scripture and rich in tradition! May God bless you!

Blessings,

*Margaret*

Margaret Bereit