

Advent: Preparing the Way of the Lord in Us and our Families

Objective: It's not even Thanksgiving yet and the Christmas songs are playing on the radio, and the stores have decorations and presents stacked to the ceiling. Yes, it's that time of the year when we celebrate the birth of our Lord, but it can get drowned out in today's media blitz of toys, gift ideas, and celebration planning. How do WE prepare ourselves and our family for the TRUE meaning of Christmas?

Advent is a time for us to step back from the hectic routine, slow down and contemplate the mystery of the incarnation, and prepare for the celebration of the birth of our Lord. It's not bad that we buy gifts, attend parties, travel to see family, those are all wonderful things; they just need to be in their place and not rule the season. How do you invigorate the true meaning of Christmas during Advent? Can you be the example for those around you too?

Song Suggestion: Prepare ye the way of the Lord (330)

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Matthew 3:1-6

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Luke 1:26-33

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

2 Peter 3:8-14

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish.

Catechism: Preparation for Christ's coming, 522,524

522 The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the "First Covenant".(195) 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.

524 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.(200) By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease."(201)

Saint Andrew: The Feast of St. Andrew (November 30)

The first saint to "kick-off" the Advent season is St. Andrew whose feast is celebrated on November 30th. Many Catholics are familiar with the the [St. Andrew Christmas Novena](#). More information: https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=109

Vignette: – Kevin and his family love the Christmas season, but he’s not sure they love it for all of the right reasons. Kevin’s wife and children are completely enamored with shopping and wish lists, and if he looks deep enough, he knows that he himself has the same focus and desires. As he shops at Home Depot for that Saturday project, Kevin walks the aisle admiring the newest power tools on sale for Christmas. As he works on his computer, he gets distracted by the same popup ads. Kevin desperately wants to turn back the clock and have him and his children focus much more on Advent during the Christmas season, but how do you “put the genie back into the bottle”? How can those of us with younger children teach and experience the wonder of Advent during the Christmas season, and how can those of us with older children, or just ourselves - turn back the clock, slow down, and focus on what Advent means?

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

What are some of the things that we do well when preparing for Christmas? What are some of the things that we could do better? We can always do better....

Do you personally do anything different during the season of Advent to prepare for the coming of our Lord?

Do you do anything different during the season of Advent with the family to prepare as a group? Do you have an Advent wreath and a place to pray?

What can you do during Advent to serve others as a way to honor the reason for the season?

Resources:

This [Catholic Guide to Advent](#) has a lot of good material to consider when preparing for Advent.

Action Plan:

- 1) Plan to do things to during Advent to prepare yourself for the coming of the Lord. Attend church one morning during the week, go to confession, say a rosary a day, consider a new daily prayer.
- 2) Talk with your wife and children about ways that you can come together as a family in preparing the way. Get the kids to give ideas that you all can follow.
- 3) Get your fathers team group, or/and your family engaged with serving others during Advent.

Author: Dan Lape