

ADVENT

Beginning the Church's liturgical year, Advent (from, "ad-venire" in Latin or "to come to") is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of [Christmas](#).

The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and also to the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. The final days of Advent, from December 17 to December 24, focus particularly on our preparation for the celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas).

Advent is a time for the faithful to prepare for Christmas spiritually, in the midst of all the shopping, decorating, baking, and parties. Advent tones down the festivity for Catholics so the real celebration can take place on the birthday of Jesus, Christmas Day.

Usually, by December 25, people have been saturated with Christmas music, Christmas parties, and Christmas carols. In Catholic parishes, though, no Christmas hymns or music are sung or played until December 25. Then they're sung all the way through New Year's, Epiphany (January 6 — when the Wise Men or Magi came to worship the Christ-child) and ending on the Baptism of the Lord (the Sunday after Epiphany — when John the Baptist baptized Jesus at the River Jordan). If you are "Christmased Out" by December 25th, you are doing Advent wrong.

Advent devotions including the [Advent wreath](#), remind us of the meaning of the season. Our Advent calendar above can help you fully enter in to the season with daily activity and prayer suggestions to prepare you spiritually for the birth of Jesus Christ. More Advent resources are listed below.

During each week of Advent a candle is lit in an Advent wreath to remind the faithful that Jesus is the Light of the World. There are three purple or violet and one rose or pink candles. During the first and second weeks of Advent the first two purple candles are lit. On the third week of Advent the pink candle is lit. The pink candle is for Gaudete Sunday. This Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally referred to as "Gaudete" Sunday; because Gaudete is the Latin word for rejoice! And "Gaudete" — "REJOICE" — is the first word of the Third Sunday of Advent's Entrance Antiphon (which is recited when a processional hymn is not sung). That one word — "REJOICE" — sets the theme for the entire third week of Advent Liturgy. On the fourth Sunday the remaining purple candle is lit.

The purple candles in particular symbolize the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices and goods works undertaken at this time. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of his second coming to judge the living and the dead.