

Advent (Dec) 4 weeks before Christmas	Christmas 1 week	Lent (Feb) 6 weeks before Easter	Easter Season 7 weeks after Easter	Ordinary Time 34 weeks
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Advent (Church year starts with Advent)

Word Meaning: noun 1. a coming into place, view, or being; arrival: the advent of the holiday season, 2. the coming of Christ into the world, 3. the period beginning four Sundays before Christmas, observed in commemoration of the coming of Christ into the world & 4. second coming [Origin: 1125–75; ME < L *adventus* arrival, approach, equiv. to *ad-* AD- + *ven-* (s. of *venīre* to come) + *-tus* suffix of verbal action].

Amnesia: Greek word translated in Scripture as *remember*. The full range of meaning is to remember in such a way as to recreate the event, not just to recall something that happened once in the past. A good example of this is the Advent/Christmas season when we await the coming of Jesus as a child. Another example would be the Mass when the redemptive act of Jesus suffering and death on the cross happens again in an unbloody way in the Eucharist.

The establishment of Advent: Fourth Canon of the Council of Saragosa (380). The Synod of Tours (567) established a December fast. Council of Macon (581) ordered an advent fast for the laity from the Feast of St. Martin (November 11) to Christmas. This took the name of St. Martin's Lent. Lectionaries (books containing the scriptural readings for the Liturgy of the Word) provided for six Sundays in Advent (600-700s). Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) fixed the season at four weeks and composed seasonal prayers and antiphons. Gaul (France) enriched the season with eschatological elements. And the fusion of the Roman and Gallican observances returned to Rome by the 1100s.

Common Practices:

1. **Advent wreath:** German origins & the most recognized Advent custom. A wreath made of evergreens bound to a circle of wire. It symbolizes 1) the many years from Adam to Christ in which the world awaited its Redeemer 2) the years awaiting His second & final coming. The wreath holds four candles, three purple ones lit on the penitential Sundays & a pink one for Gaudete (joyful) third Sunday in Advent. Prayers & hymns available to accompany personal Advent wreath.
2. **The empty manger:** Usually used for children. When acts of service, sacrifice, or kindness are done in honor of Baby Jesus as a birthday present, the child receives a piece of straw to put in the manger. On Christmas morning, Baby Jesus is placed in the manger. Encourage children to make Jesus' bed as comfortable as possible through their good deeds. During, explain Christ's incomparable self-gift at Christmas and Easter, enabling us to be part of God's family.
3. **The Jesse tree:** Tells about Christ's ancestry through symbols & relates Scripture to salvation history, progressing from creation to the birth of Christ. The tree can be poster board with glued symbols, or an actual tree.
4. **St. Nicholas Day:** The feast of St. Nicholas is Dec. 6th. Each child puts out a shoe the night before St. Nicholas Day in the hope that the kind bishop — with his miter, staff, and bag of gifts — will pay a visit. Santa Claus is modeled after St. Nicholas. Many families give gifts on both Dec. 6 and Christmas.
5. **The Christ candle:** Large white candle is decorated it with symbols for Christ using old Christmas cards, sequins, holly, etc. The candle is lit on Christmas Eve to show the Light of the World has arrived. Continue to light the candle throughout the year at Sunday dinner to remind your family of our waiting for Christ in His second coming, as well as celebrating His birth and Resurrection.
6. **The Mary candle:** Custom of decorating the Christ candle with a blue veil on December 8th, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On this great feast, others place a candle with a blue ribbon before a statue or picture of the Blessed Virgin, whose “yes” to God enabled our Lord's coming

at Christmas. The candle is lit during meal times to serve as a delightful reminder of Mary's eager expectation of the Light of the World. It also serves as a reminder to keep our own light burning as a preparation for Christ's coming.

7. **St. Lucy cakes:** Feast of St. Lucy, virgin and martyr, is Dec. 13th. Marks opening of the Christmas season in Sweden. Her life story can be found in most saints books, as can the recipe for the traditional cakes. The symbolism is rich and her life story worthwhile reading.
8. **The Nativity scene:** The event of setting up the Christmas manger. Mary and Joseph should be far off traveling and their approach to Bethlehem can be adjusted daily. You can make a life-size Nativity model, carve them, cut them out from cardboard, or set up pre-made figurines. Make sure to place the Nativity scene where many can admire the children's efforts to give God glory.
9. **Christmas baking:** There are many recipe books available to find great traditional Christmas baking ideas. The baking usually starts around Dec 20th. As Christmas approaches, the house will smell of baking and fresh wreaths. Move the manger to a focal point, add lights to the Nativity to be lighted on Christmas Eve, and anticipate together.
10. **Blessing of the tree:** More and more frequently families are blessing their Christmas trees. The tree relates to many aspects of our faith, for example, 1) we are reminded that our first parents (Adam & Eve) were not allowed to eat from one tree & 2) that Christ paid the great price for our redemption by hanging on a tree.

The Symbolism of the Advent Wreath

Form of a circle – with no beginning and no end is a symbol for God, Who is eternal, without beginning or end.

Evergreens - branches are always green & alive; symbolic of Christ, Who died, but Who is alive, never to die again; also symbolize our soul's immortality; entwined around the evergreens are red holly berries that look like large red drops of blood, symbolizing the blood shed by Christ for mankind to redeem us by His death, since through the shedding of His blood that we have eternal life.

4 candles, 3 violet & 1 rose colored – symbolize the four weeks of the Advent season (preparation); the Liturgy tells us of the Hebrew expectation of the Messiah in the Old Testament reading, and the Gospels introduce us to the characters of the Christmas story; each week a candle is lit starting with 1 and increasing to 4, reminding us that the birth of the Light of the World is coming closer, so that our souls grow brighter in their love for, and anticipation of, the Christ Child as this season of grace continues.

Candle colors – violet (penitence) reminds Advent is a season of spiritually preparing our souls to receive Christ on Christmas; rose (rejoice) is lit on the third Sunday (Gaudete Sunday) symbolizing an element of rejoicing in the midst of our penitential preparation (rose color is made by mixing violet with white [purity]); on Christmas, the four candles are replaced with white ones (great joy).

Candle base has a blue bowl - reminds us of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God (Theotokos), who bore Him & brought Him forth.

Placed in a prominent place in our church. Many families have a smaller Advent wreath in their homes. This reminds families of the wreath in their church and serves as a reminder of their link to the parish church. The candles are lit at the main meal of the day, with the new candle lit preferably at the main meal on Sunday, the first day of the new week. Joining at table for a meal reminds the family of the table of the Lord around which they gather each week to celebrate the Eucharist -- the meal of the Lord that nourishes our soul.