



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Frequently Asked Questions About Advent

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What does the word "Advent" mean?

It is from the Latin word, "adventus," which means "to wait."

What is the significance of the Advent season?

Advent is a time when we prepare to celebrate and remember Christ's first coming in the Incarnation and a time when we are reminded that we need to prepare for Christ's second coming at the end of time.

Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation. The "General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar (GNLYC)" notes the season looks to the future and to the past. The Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy characterizes Advent as a season of "waiting, conversion and hope."

Where and when did Advent originate?

There is evidence of some period of preparation for the Christmas-Epiphany celebration as early as the mid-fourth century. At that time in France, the preparation for Christmas began on the Feast of St. Martin (Nov. 11) and lasted through Christmas to Epiphany, which was one of the principal days for the celebration of baptism by adults.

Sixth-century Irish missionaries emphasized the last judgment, so Advent became a penitential season with fasting, prayer and purple vestments. The four-week Advent season developed in the

sixth century under Pope Gregory the Great and included prayers focused on the Incarnation of Christ.

While the Roman liturgy began taking shape in the 11th century, it was codified by the Council of Trent (1545-63) and enhanced by Vatican II.

The liturgy has some elements of a penitential season, such as purple vestments, but is primarily a time of joyful expectation. The Alleluia is retained. The Gloria is omitted, but for a different reason: in order that on the night of Christmas, the angels' song "may ring out once again in all its newness" (GNLYC).

When does Advent begin and end?

Advent always begins with evening prayer of the Sunday which falls on or closest to November 30; thus never earlier than November 27 or later than December 3.

In the revised liturgical calendar, the Fourth Sunday of Advent must be celebrated, even when it falls on December 24.

Advent ends with the celebration of evening prayer of Christmas and the Christmas vigil Mass (if one is celebrated).

Why is purple the primary liturgical color of both Ad-

vent and Lent?

Violet is the shade of repentance. It is also the color of kings and royalty and of sorrow and mourning. The church custom the past 20-25 years has been to separate the two colors so that the Advent purple is bluer and the Lenten purple is redder. This helps emphasize the fact the seasons are unique and different.

Why is the sacrament of reconciliation also emphasized during Advent?

The Season of Advent calls us to prepare for Christ come among us. It seems only fitting that part of that preparation involves a renewed commitment to live the faith we profess. The sacrament of reconciliation invites us not only to celebrate God's forgiveness, but to be strengthened for the church's mission of bringing Christ to the world.

What are the origins of the Advent wreath? Why is it round with four candles?

The origins of the Advent wreath can be traced to 16th-century Germany; however, the custom did not become widespread in the U.S. until the 20th century.

The custom originated in the home because of the use of candles to light a room, which became even more necessary during the shorter days of Advent.

The round wreath is an appro-

priate symbol as it has no beginning and no end, reminding us of the eternity of God. The green of the wreath symbolizes life even in the midst of the season when most plants are dead.

The four candles, of course, mark the four weeks of Advent. The candles may be all violet, all white, or three violet and one rose for the third week, Gaudete Sunday. The candles' flame reminds us that Christ is the light of the world. The light from the wreath gets brighter with the lighting of each additional candle as we near Christmas.

What does Gaudete Sunday mean?

This term is referred to as the Third Sunday of Advent. This day is regarded as a day of particular joy with Advent half over and Christmas soon to follow.

The custom of wearing a rose vestment, as opposed to violet, was the most dramatic demonstration of the uniqueness of this Advent Sunday.

The term Gaudete is taken from Philippians 4:4-7.

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Saint in the Spotlight: Lazarus

On Wednesday, December 17, the Church will remember Lazarus.

Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was the one of whom the Jews said, "See how much he loved him." In their sight Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead.

Legends abound about the life of Lazarus after the death and resurrection of Jesus. He is supposed to have left a written account of what he saw in the next world before he was called back to life. Some say he followed Peter into Syria. Another story is that despite being put into a leaking boat by the Jews at Jaffa, he, his sisters and others landed safely in Cyprus. There he died peacefully after

serving as bishop for 30 years.

A church was built in his honor in Constantinople and some of his reputed relics were transferred there in 890. A Western legend has the oarless boat arriving in Gaul. There he was bishop of Marseilles, was martyred after making a number of converts and was buried in a cave. His relics were transferred to the new cathedral in Autun in 1146.

It is certain there was early devotion to the saint. Around the year 390, the pilgrim lady Etheria talks of the procession that took place on the Saturday before Palm Sunday at the tomb where Lazarus had been raised from the dead. In the West, Passion Sunday was called Dominica de Lazaro, and Augustine

tells us that in Africa the Gospel of the raising of Lazarus was read at the office of Palm Sunday.

Comment:

Many people who have had a near-death experience report losing all fear of death. When Lazarus died a second time, perhaps he was without fear. He must have been sure that Jesus, the friend with whom he had shared many meals and conversations, would be waiting to raise him again. We don't share Lazarus' firsthand knowledge of returning from the grave. Nevertheless, we too have shared meals and conversations with Jesus, who waits to raise us, too. www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay

Christmas Novena

A Christmas novena is usually prayed, starting nine days before Christmas (December 16), days marked by more intense preparation. The Christmas novena was especially important to Hispanic and Germanic cultures. The following novena was composed by an Italian priest, Rev. Charles Vachetta, C.M., in 1721. The novena consists of Opening Responsory Prayers, Psalm (Let the Heavens Be Glad), Scripture Reading, Magnificat with Daily Antiphon and Closing Prayer (find the full script of the Novena at www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/prayers/view.cfm?id=939). This novena is prayed in conjunction with the O Antiphons.

Daily Scripture Reading and Antiphon:

Dec 16: Genesis 3:1-15; Romans 1:18-26 *Behold, the King will come, the Lord of the earth, and He will remove from us the yoke of our captivity.*

Dec 17: Genesis 3:14-20; Romans 5:12-21 *O Wisdom, who came from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end and ordering all things mightily and sweetly, **Come**, and teach us the way of prudence.*

Dec 18: Genesis 17:15-23; Romans 4:13-23 *O Lord and Ruler of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the flame of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: **Come** and redeem us with outstretched arm.*

Dec 19: Deuteronomy 15:13-20; Acts 3:18-26 *O Root of Jesse, who stands for an ensign of the people, before whom kings shall keep silence and unto whom the Gentiles shall make supplication: **Come** to deliver us, and tarry not.*

Dec 20: Isaiah 28:14-20; Romans 10:5-11 *O Key of David, and Sceptre of the House of Israel, who opens and no man shuts, who shuts and no man opens: **Come** and bring forth the captive from his prison, he who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.*

Dec 21: 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Luke 1:26-39 *O King of the Gentiles and their desired One, the Cornerstone that makes both one: **Come**, and deliver man, whom You formed out the dust of the earth.*

Dec 22: Deuteronomy 7:6-21; Ephesians 2:12-22 *O King of the Gentiles and their desired One, the Cornerstone that makes both one: **Come**, and deliver man, whom You formed out of the dust of the earth.*

Dec 23: Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25 *O Emmanuel, God with us, our King and Lawgiver, the expected of the nations and their Savior: **Come** to save us, O Lord our God.*

Dec 24: Micah 5:1-5; Luke 2:1-8 *With the rising of the sun, you will soon see the King of kings and Lord of lords, coming forth from His Father, as the bridegroom, from His bridal chamber.*

St Andrew Christmas Novena

Hail, and blessed be the hour and moment
At which the Son of God was born
Of a most pure Virgin
At a stable at midnight in Bethlehem
In the piercing cold
At that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee,
To hear my prayers and grant my desires:
(mention request here)
Through Jesus Christ
and His most Blessed Mother.

Normally prayed beginning with the feast of St Andrew the Apostle (Nov 30), recited 15 times a day until Christmas