

ADVENT MEANING, HISTORY, TRADITIONS & ACTIVITIES.

Introduction:

The word “**Advent**” comes from the Latin word “Adventus” which means “coming”. During the four weeks of Advent, we are preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ. In the readings at Mass, we are asked to prepare the way of the Lord. Preparations are important during Advent. We prepare at home, in school and at the church. But the most important preparation is the preparation of our hearts.

The History of Advent.

Advent (from Latin adventus, “coming”), in the Christian church calendar, the period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas and also of preparation for the Second Coming of Christ. In Western churches, Advent begins on the Sunday nearest to November 30 (St. Andrew’s Day) and is the beginning of the liturgical year. In many Eastern churches, the Nativity Fast is a similar period of penance and preparation that occurs during the 40 days before Christmas. The date when the season was first observed is uncertain. Bishop Perpetuus of Tours (461–490) established a fast before Christmas that began on November 11 (St. Martin’s Day), and the Council of Tours (567) mentioned an Advent season.

The Meaning of Advent.

The liturgical meaning of the Advent season referred to the dual “coming” of Jesus. In Roman Catholicism the traditional liturgical colour for Advent is violet; many Protestant denominations have adopted blue or purple. The third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday, is commonly marked using rose-coloured vestments and candles.

The Advent Wreath.

Many churches and Christian homes mark the four Sundays of the season with an Advent wreath, which consists of four candles—typically three violet and one rose-coloured—surrounded by greenery or other decorations. The first candle is lit the first Sunday of Advent, often with a prayer or devotion, and the following week the first and second candles are lit, and so on. The tradition, which began in the 19th century but had roots in

the 16th, originally involved a fir wreath with 24 candles (the 24 days before Christmas, starting December 1), but the awkwardness of having so many candles on the wreath reduced the number to four. The candles are often said to symbolize hope, peace, joy, and love, respectively.

The History of Advent Calendars.

An analogous, and often secular, custom is the Advent calendar, which provides 24 openings, one to be opened each day beginning December 1. According to tradition, the calendar was created in the 19th century by a Munich housewife who tired of having to answer endlessly when Christmas would come. The first commercial calendars were printed in Germany in 1851 and often reveal a chocolate or other treat behind each door.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

This article was most recently revised and updated by Alicja Zelazko.

Advent Themes.

Advent is a four-week season dedicated to reflective preparation for the arrival, "advent", of Jesus Christ's Nativity at Christmas time as well and Christ's expected return in the Second Coming. During this important event on the church calendar, each week of Advent focuses on a different theme - **hope, peace, joy, and love**. Christians from all denominations and backgrounds celebrate Advent in different ways but all focus on the anticipation of waiting for the arrival of Jesus.

When is Advent in 2025?

The liturgical calendar of Advent focuses on the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Each year, Advent will begin on a Sunday between November 27th and December 3rd. Here are the Advent Sundays for this year, 2025:

First Sunday of Advent - November 30th (Start of Advent 2025)

Second Sunday of Advent - December 7th

Third Sunday of Advent - December 14th

Fourth Sunday of Advent - December 21st (End of Advent on Christmas Eve)

Advent Readings and Themes for Each Week.

Advent readings are themed Scripture readings for each Sunday of Advent. In many churches and homes, a candle is lit on each Sunday while Scripture is read. The four weeks of Advent are broken down into the themes:

First Week, Candle of Hope: Isaiah 9

Second Week, Peace Candle: Isaiah 40

Third Week, Joy (or Shepherd's Candle) : Matthew 2

Fourth Week, Love Candle: John 3

One of the beautiful things about the Advent readings above is that they allow churches to include both young and old in their services. The same can be true of private family devotions around the Advent wreath.

Advent Prayer.

Prayer is a beautiful way to help cut away from distractions of the season and open your heart to prepare for the joy and hope of Christ's birth. Here is a reflective prayer to use during the season to focus your heart and mind on the birth of Jesus Christ.

This Advent, Lord, come to the manger of my heart.

Fill me with Your presence from the very start.

As I prepare for the holidays and gifts to be given,

Remind me of the gift You gave when You sent Your Son from Heaven.

The first Christmas gift was the greatest gift ever.

You came as a baby born in a manger.

Wrapped like the gifts I find under my tree,

Waiting to be opened, to reveal Your love to me.

Restore to me the wonder that came with Jesus' birth,

When He left the riches of Heaven and wrapped Himself in rags of earth.

Immanuel, God with us, Your presence came that night.

And angels announced, "Into your darkness, God brings His Light."

"Do not be afraid," they said , to shepherds in the field.

Speak to my heart today, Lord, and help me to yield.

Make me like those shepherd boys, obedient to Your call.

Setting distractions and worries aside, to You I surrender them all.

Surround me with Your presence, Lord, I long to hear Your voice.

Clear my mind of countless concerns and all the holiday noise.

Slow me down this Christmas, let me not be in a rush.

In the midst of parties and planning, I want to feel Your hush.

This Christmas, Jesus, come to the manger of my heart.

Invade my soul like Bethlehem, bringing peace to every part.

Dwell within and around me, as I unwrap Your presence each day.

Keep me close to You, Lord. It's in Your wonderful Name I pray. Amen.

~Renee Swope, "The Manger of My Heart" from Proverbs 31 Ministries

Justin Holcomb is an Episcopal priest and teaches theology at Reformed Theological Seminary and Knox Theological Seminary.

<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/what-is-advent.html#advent-prayer>

<https://kids.britannica.com/middle/article/Advent/309704/related#nodeId=main&page=1>