

Excerpted from:

*Catholic
Family
Prayer
Book*

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ADVENT

The Church's liturgical year begins with the season of Advent. It begins on the Sunday closest to November 30 and ends with the Christmas Vigil Mass. In Advent, a time of joyful expectation, we focus on and prepare for the remembrance of Jesus' first coming in Bethlehem and His Second Coming at the end of time.

Prayer to Obtain Favors

Prayer from 1897 that may be prayed numerous times a day from the Feast of St. Andrew on November 30 until Christmas.

Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. In that hour vouchsafe, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of His Blessed Mother.

Amen.



The Messianic Prophecies

Advent is an ideal time to review the Messianic Prophecies. There are five significant stories in the Old Testament where the coming of the Messiah is foretold. Families may meditate on one per day.

1. Born of the House of David

Prophecy: 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalms 89:2-52, 132:11

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:1-25

2. Virgin Birth

Prophecy: Isaiah 7:14

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:20-25

3. Bethlehem

Prophecy: Micah 5:1-3

Fulfilled: Matthew 2:5-6

4. Wise Men and Their Gifts

Prophecy: Isaiah 49:23, 60:5 and Psalm 72:10-15

Fulfilled: Matthew 2:9-12

5. Holy Innocents

Prophecy: Jeremiah 31:15

Fulfilled: Matthew 2:16-18³⁹

Prayer to St. Nicholas

God, our Father,
we pray that through the intercession of
St. Nicholas
you will protect our children.
Keep them safe from harm
and help them grow and become worthy in
your sight.
Give them strength to keep their faith in you;
and to keep alive their joy in your creation.
Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.
Amen.

(The feast day of St. Nicholas is December 6.)

Advent Prayer

BY HENRI J.M. NOUWEN

Lord Jesus,
Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations
for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces
to hear your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things look
forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways long for
the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your
presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet
seeking the light.
To you we say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"
Amen.

Reflection on Advent

BY BL. COLUMBA MARMION, O.S.B.

This humble Virgin is the Queen of Patriarchs, since she is of their holy lineage, and since the Child whom she is about to bring into the world is the Son who resumes in His person all the magnificence of the ancient promises.

She is, too, the Queen of Prophets, since she is to bring forth the Word by Whom all the prophets spoke, since her Son is to fulfill all prophecy and announce to all people the good news of redemption (Lk 4:19).

Let us humbly ask her to make us enter into her dispositions. She will hear our prayer; we shall have the immense joy of seeing Christ born anew within our hearts by the communication of a more abundant grace, and we shall be enabled, like the Virgin, although in a lesser measure, to understand the truth of these words of St. John: "The Word was God ... and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory .. full of grace and truth ... And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (Jn 1:14-16).⁴¹

Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego near Mexico City in 1531 and left her image on his cloak. She is Patron of the Americas. Feast Day: December 12.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, mystical Rose, make intercession for our Holy Church, protect the Pope, help all those who invoke you in their necessities, and since you are the ever Virgin Mary and Mother of the true God, obtain for us from your most Holy Son, the grace of keeping our faith, sweet hope in the midst of the bitterness of life, burning charity, and the precious gift of final perseverance.

Amen.

O Antiphons

Prayed each day at the Magnificat of Evening Prayer from December 17 to December 24. Authors unknown, these prayers are from the ninth century or older.

DECEMBER 17:

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God,
you govern all creation with
your strong yet tender care.
Come and show your people the way to
salvation.

DECEMBER 18:

O sacred Lord of ancient Israel,
who showed yourself to Moses in the burning
bush,
who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain:
come, stretch out your mighty hand to set
us free.

DECEMBER 19:

O Flower of Jesse's stem,
you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples;
kings stand silent in your presence;
the nations bow down in worship before you.
Come, let nothing keep you from coming to
our aid.

DECEMBER 20:

O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel
controlling at your will the gate of heaven:
come, break down the prison walls of death
for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow
of death;
and lead your captive people into freedom.

DECEMBER 21:

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light,
sun of justice:
come, shine on those who dwell in darkness
and the shadow of death.

DECEMBER 22:

O King of all the nations,
the only joy of every human heart;
O Keystone of the mighty arch of humankind,
Come and save the creature you fashioned from
the dust.

DECEMBER 23:

O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver,
desire of all the nations,
Savior of all people,
come and set us free, Lord our God.

CHRISTMAS

At Christmas, December 25, we celebrate the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary. The Christmas Season begins with the Vigil Mass of Christmas and ends with the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord.

Blessing of a Christmas Crèche or a Manger Scene

All make the Sign of the Cross. The leader begins:
Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All respond.
Who made heaven and earth.

The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:

We are at the beginning of the days of Christmas. All through the season we will look on these images of sheep and cattle, of shepherds, of Mary and Joseph and Jesus.

Then the Scripture is read:

Listen to the words of the holy gospel according to Luke:

Read Luke 2:1-7.

The reader concludes:

The gospel of the Lord.

All respond:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The figures may be placed in the crèche. After a time of silence, all join in prayers of intercession and in the Lord's Prayer. Then the leader invites: Pray now for God's blessing as we look on these figures.

After a short silence, the leader prays:

God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
you have made manifest your love:
when our need for a Savior was great,
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin
Mary.

To our lives he brings joy and peace,
justice, mercy and love.

Lord,
bless all who look upon this manger;
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus
and raise our thoughts to him.
who is God-with-us and Savior of all,
and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

Or:

God of Mary and Joseph, of shepherds and
animals,
bless us whenever we gaze on this manger scene.
Through all the days of Christmas
may these figures tell the story
of how humans, angels, and animals
found the Christ in this poor place.
Fill our house with hospitality, joy, gentleness,
and thanksgiving.
and guide our steps in the way of peace.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

The leader says:

Let us bless the Lord.

All respond, making the Sign of the Cross.

Thanks be to God.

*Christmas songs and carols are then sung.*⁴²

(A prominently placed manger scene during Christmas teaches the true meaning of the holiday: the coming of Christ as man to free us from the power of death. The above blessing is done on Christmas or Christmas Eve when most families add the Baby Jesus to the crèche.)

Christmas Prayer

BY GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Moonless darkness stands between.
Past, the Past, no more be seen!
But the Bethlehem star may lead me
To the sight of Him who freed me
From the self that I have been.
Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;
Now beginning, and always,
Now begin, on Christmas day.

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 your request here).
Through Jesus⁴³ Christ and His most blessed
Mother.

The Twelve Days of Christmas

Developed from an English hymn in 1645 called "In Those Twelve Days." Each number is a symbol for a truth of the Faith and was often used as a teaching tool.

- ONE PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE = The one true God
- TWO TURTLE DOVES = The two Testaments, Old and New
- THREE FRENCH HENS = The three Persons of the Trinity
- FOUR COLLEY (OR CALLING) BIRDS = The Four Evangelists
- FIVE GOLDEN RINGS = The five books of the Pentateuch (in the Bible)
- SIX GEESE A-LAYING = The six jars of water at Cana (Jesus' first miracle)
- SEVEN SWANS A-SWIMMING = The Seven Sacraments
- EIGHT MAIDS A-MILKING = The Eight Beatitudes
- NINE DRUMMERS DRUMMING = The nine choirs of angels
- TEN PIPERS PIPING = The Ten Commandments
- ELEVEN LADIES DANCING = The eleven faithful apostles (or the eleven stars seen in the Old Testament)
- TWELVE LORDS A-LEAPING = The Twelve Tribes of Israel (or the Twelve Apostles)⁴⁴