

# Season of Advent

## General Texts

Advent has a twofold character: as a time to prepare for the solemnity of Christmas when the Son of God's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, the season of Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation.

Advent begins with Evening Prayer I of the Sunday falling on or closest to 30 November and ends before Evening Prayer I of Christmas.

The weekdays from 17 December to 24 December inclusive serve to prepare more directly for the Lord's birth.

*General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* 39, 40, 42

When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

For this reason the Church, especially during Advent and Lent and above all at the Easter Vigil, re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history in the "today" of her liturgy. But this also demands that catechesis help the faithful to open themselves to this spiritual understanding of the economy of salvation as the Church's liturgy reveals it and enables us to live it.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 524, 1095

Advent is a time of waiting, conversion and of hope:

- waiting—memory of the first, humble coming of the Lord in our mortal flesh; waiting—supplication for his final, glorious coming as Lord of History and universal Judge;
- conversion, to which the Liturgy at this time often refers quoting the prophets, especially John the Baptist, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2);
- joyful hope that the salvation already accomplished by Christ (cf. Rm 8:24–25) and the reality of grace in the world, will mature and reach their fulness, thereby granting us what is promised by faith, and "we shall become like him for we shall see him as he really is" (John 3:2).

*Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* 96

Each gospel reading has a distinctive theme: the Lord's coming at the end of time (First Sunday of Advent), John the Baptist (Second and Third Sunday), and the events that prepared immediately for the Lord's birth (Fourth Sunday).

The Old Testament readings are prophecies about the Messiah and the Messianic age, especially from the Isaiah.

The readings from an apostle serve as exhortations and as proclamations, in keeping with the different themes of Advent.

*Introduction to the Lectionary* 93

## Excerpts from Prayers

*Christ may find an eager welcome at his coming*

Opening Prayer, 1st Sunday of Advent, Roman Missal (RM)

*Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy*

Opening Prayer, 2nd Sunday of Advent (RM)

*Lord, fill our hearts with your love,  
and as you revealed to us by an angel  
the coming of your Son as man,  
so lead through his suffering and death  
to the glory of his resurrection.*

Opening Prayer, 4th Sunday of Advent, (RM)

*Come Lord Jesus, do not delay.*

Opening Prayer, 24 December (RM)

*Now we watch for the day,  
hoping that the salvation promised us will be ours  
when Christ the Lord will come again in glory.*

Preface of Advent I (RM)

*His future coming was proclaimed by all the prophets.*

*The virgin mother bore him in her womb  
with love beyond all telling.*

*John the Baptist was his herald*

*and made him known when at last he came.*

*In his love Christ has filled us with joy  
as we prepare to celebrate his birth,  
so that when he comes he may find us watching in prayer,  
our hearts filled in wonder and praise.*

Preface of Advent II (RM)

## Cycle of Prayer

Openness to the Word of God

*especially on Bible Sunday (2nd Sunday in Advent)*

Migrants and Refugees

*especially on Migrants' Day (3 December)*

Expectant Mothers

*especially on 4th Sunday in Advent*

# Sundays of Advent

	Year A	Year B	Year C	
First Sunday	<b>Entrance Antiphon</b>	Ps 24:1-3 <i>To you, my God, I lift my soul, I trust in you; let me never come to shame. Do not let my enemies laugh at me. No one who waits for you is ever put to shame.</i> (the following psalm may be used for verses) Ps 24		
	<b>First Reading</b>	Is 2:1-5 <i>The Lord gathers all nations together into the eternal peace of God's kingdom.</i>	Is 63:16-17; 64:3-8 <i>Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down.</i>	Jer 33:14-16 <i>I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David.</i>
	<b>Responsorial Psalm</b>	Ps 121:1-2, 4b-5, 6-7, 8-9 r. 1 <i>I rejoiced when I heard them say: 'Let us go to God's house.'</i>	Ps 79:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 <i>God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.</i>	Ps 24:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14 <i>To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul</i>
	<b>Second Reading</b>	Rom 13:11-14 <i>Our salvation is near at hand</i>	1 Cor 1:3-9 <i>We are waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.</i>	1 Thess 3:12-4:2 <i>May the Lord confirm your hearts in holiness when Christ comes</i>
	<b>Gospel Acclamation</b>	Ps 84:8 <i>Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and show us your saving help</i>	Ps 84:8 <i>Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and show us your saving help</i>	Ps 84:8 <i>Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and show us your saving help</i>
	<b>Gospel</b>	Matt 24:37-44 <i>Stay awake so that you may be ready</i>	Mark 13:33-37 <i>Stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming.</i>	Luke 21:25-28, 34-36 <i>Your liberation is near at hand.</i>
	<b>Communion Antiphon</b>	Ps 84:13 <i>The Lord will shower his gifts, and our land will yield its fruit.</i> (the following psalm may be used for verses) Ps 84		
Second Sunday	<b>Entrance Antiphon</b>	cf. Is 30:19.30 <i>People of Zion, the Lord will come to save all nations, and your hearts will exult to hear his majestic voice.</i> (the following psalm may be used for verses) Ps 79		
	<b>First Reading</b>	Is 11:1-10 <i>He judges the wretched with integrity.</i>	Is 40:1-5, 9-11 <i>Prepare a way for the Lord.</i>	Bar 5:1-9 <i>God means to show your splendour to every nation.</i>
	<b>Responsorial Psalm</b>	Ps 71:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 <i>In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails.</i>	Ps 84:9-10, 11-12, 13-14 <i>Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help.</i>	Ps 125:1-2a, 2b-3, 4-5, 6 <i>What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed we were glad.</i>
	<b>Second Reading</b>	Rom 15:4-9 <i>Christ is the saviour of all men.</i>	2 Pet 3:8-14 <i>We are waiting for the new heaven and new earth</i>	Phil 1:4-6, 8-11 <i>Be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.</i>
	<b>Gospel Acclamation</b>	Luke 3: 4, 6 <i>Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.</i>	Luke 3: 4, 6 <i>Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.</i>	Luke 3: 4, 6 <i>Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight, and all mankind shall see the salvation of God.</i>
	<b>Gospel</b>	Matt 3:1-12 <i>Repent, for the kingdom of God is close at hand</i>	Mark 1:1-8 <i>Make his paths straight.</i>	Luke 3:1-6 <i>All mankind shall see the salvation of God.</i>
	<b>Communion Antiphon</b>	Bar 5:5; 4:36 <i>Rise up, Jerusalem, stand on the heights, and see the joy that is coming to you from God.</i> (one of the following texts may be used for verses) Ps 147:12-20 or Is 12:2-6		
	Year A	Year B	Year C	

# Antiphons and Readings

	Year A	Year B	Year C	
<b>Entrance Antiphon</b>	Phil 4:4.5 <i>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near.</i> (one of the following psalms may be used for verses) Ps 84: 9–14 or Ps 95: 7–13			<b>Third Sunday</b>
<b>First Reading</b>	Is 35:1–6a, 10 <i>God himself is coming to save you</i>	Is 61:1–2a, 10–11 <i>I exult for joy in the Lord.</i>	Zeph 3:14–18a <i>The Lord will dance with shouts of joy for you as on a day of festival.</i>	
<b>Responsorial Psalm</b>	Ps 145:6–7, 8–9a, 9b–10 <i>Come, Lord, and save us or Alleluia!</i>	Luke 1:46–48, 49–50, 53–54 <i>My soul glorifies the Lord</i>	Is 12:2–3, 4, 5–6 <i>Sing and shout for joy for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.</i>	
<b>Second Reading</b>	Jas 5:7–10 <i>Do not lose heart for the Lord's coming will be soon.</i>	1 Thess 5:16–24 <i>May you all be kept safe, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of the Lord.</i>	Phil 4:4–7 <i>The Lord is very near.</i>	
<b>Gospel Acclamation</b>	Is 61:1 (Lk4: 18) <i>The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.</i>	Is 61:1 (Lk4: 18) <i>The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.</i>	Is 61:1 (Lk4: 18) <i>The spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor.</i>	
<b>Gospel</b>	Matt 11:2–11 <i>Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?</i>	John 1:6–8, 19–28 <i>There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.</i>	Luke 3:10–18 <i>What must we do?</i>	
<b>Communion Antiphon</b>	cf. Is 35:4 <i>Say to the anxious: be strong and fear not, our God will come to save us.</i> (the following text may be used for verses) Is 35: 1–10			
<b>Entrance Antiphon</b>	Is 45:8 <i>Let the clouds rain down the Just One, and the earth bring forth a Saviour.</i> (one of the following psalms may be used for verses) Ps 18:2–7 or Ps 71			<b>Fourth Sunday</b>
<b>First Reading</b>	Is 7:10–14 <i>The maiden is with child.</i>	2 Sam 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16 <i>The kingdom of David will always stand secure before the Lord.</i>	Mic 5:1–4a <i>Out of you will be born the one who is to rule over Israel.</i>	
<b>Responsorial Psalm</b>	Ps 23:1–2, 3–4, 5–6 <i>Let the Lord enter! He is the king of glory.</i>	Ps 88:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29 <i>I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord.</i>	Ps 79:2–3, 15–16, 18–19 <i>God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.</i>	
<b>Second Reading</b>	Rom 1:1–7 <i>Jesus Christ, descendant of David, Son of God.</i>	Rom 16:25–27 <i>The mystery, which was kept secret for endless ages, is now made clear.</i>	Heb 10:5–10 <i>Here I am! I am coming to obey your will.</i>	
<b>Gospel Acclamation</b>	Mt 1: 23 <i>The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.</i>	Luke 1: 38 <i>I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me.</i>	Luke 1: 38 <i>I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me.</i>	
<b>Gospel</b>	Matt 1:18–24 <i>Jesus is born of Mary who was betrothed to Joseph, son of David.</i>	Luke 1:26–38 <i>Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son.</i>	Luke 1:39–45 <i>Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord!</i>	
<b>Communion Antiphon</b>	Is 7:14 <i>The Virgin is with child and shall bear a son, and she will call him Emmanuel.</i> (one of the following texts may be used for verses) Ps 18:2–7 or Luke 1: 46–55			
	Year A	Year B	Year C	

## Season of Advent *Pastoral Notes*

In the course of the year, the Church unfolds the whole mystery of Christ from the incarnation and nativity to the Ascension, Pentecost, and the expectation of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord. The season of Advent, at the conclusion of the calendar year and the beginning of the Church's year, embraces both ends of this cycle. Advent begins with Evening Prayer I of the First Sunday of Advent and ends on 24 December, before Evening Prayer I of Christmas.

In some parts of the Church where baptism was once celebrated at Epiphany, the forty days prior to it were devoted to ascetical preparation, and Advent took on several of the liturgical features of Lent. Now, however, "it is no longer considered a penitential season but a time of joyful expectation."

Advent has a twofold character. It is the season to prepare for Christmas, when Christ's first coming is remembered, and it is the "season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, the season of Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation."

This twofold character is reflected in the two stages of Advent, each with its own special focus expressed in the corresponding preface of the eucharistic prayer. From the first Sunday to 16 December, the liturgy expresses the eschatological expectation of Advent, the watchfulness of God's people looking forward to the time when Christ will come again in glory and majesty, and "the salvation promised us will be ours." From 17 December until Christmas eve, the texts proper to each day prepare us more directly to celebrate the Lord's birth, "our hearts filled with wonder and praise."

Advent is not simply a preparation to commemorate the historical event of Christmas nor primarily an expectation of the parousia, but is rather an anticipation or a beginning of the celebration of the integral mystery of the incarnation, the advent and the epiphany of the Son of God in flesh and in majesty. The Christian community lives in an "interim" time between two historical events: the coming of Christ in the flesh and his coming in glory at the end of time. The Church is called to be strong in faith "as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

- The use of violet in Advent suggests a state of unfulfilled readiness and should no longer be regarded as an expression of penitence. It serves to set off the joyful white of Christmas with greater dramatic effect.

- For the same reason, music in Advent may be more restrained, for example, in the use of the organ and other instruments. The Gloria is not used on the Sundays of Advent, not because it is a penitential season, but so that the Gloria, the hymn of the angels may resound with greater freshness on Christmas night.
- In all three years of the lectionary cycle, the focus of each Sunday is clearly identifiable: on the first Sunday, the return of the Lord; on the second, John the Baptist's call to conversion; on the third, the relationship of John to Jesus; on the fourth, Mary and the events immediately preceding Christ's birth.

Advent, as a period of expectation and preparation, is closely related to, yet distinct from, the feast of Christmas for which it prepares. This can create a certain tension if the weeks before Christmas are exploited for commercial purposes or where social celebrations of the feast are anticipated in schools and places of work.

- Popular devotions should respect the nature and character of Advent and should be consistent with the themes presented in the Lectionary for Mass and the Missal. The anticipation of the Christmas feast should be avoided. Songs, carols, and devotions which focus on the nativity itself are out of place in Advent, especially before 17 December.
- School and other communities unable to be together on Christmas Day itself are encouraged to arrange Christmas celebrations within the season of Christmas, i.e. between the time of Christmas Day and the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, rather than during Advent. This is to avoid compromising the keeping of the season of Advent, and provide an opportunity to better indicate the distinction between the Christian feast of Christmas and the associated secular celebrations.
- Where they are the custom, the Advent wreath and the Jesse tree, which help to sustain an expectant orientation toward Christmas, can assist the liturgical celebration and may be associated with the celebration of Mass. The wreath can be blessed on the First Sunday of Advent. At subsequent celebrations the candles are lighted either before Mass begins or immediately before the Collect (Opening Prayer); no additional rites or prayers are used.
- Vigils, services of light, and celebrations of reconciliation may be very effective in fostering a sense of watchfulness and prayer and in disposing the community to a more fruitful participation in the Masses of Advent.

## Other material

- Book of Blessings: *Blessing of Advent Wreath* — Chapter 47
- Rite of Penance: *Appendix 2 Sample Penitential Services* — *Penitential Celebrations during Advent*
- General Instruction of the Roman Missal: *Use of flowers* — 305; *use of musical instruments* — 313