

# Advent at Home 2021

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PART 2: Activities of the Family

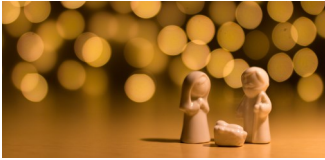
## MAKE ROOM FOR JESUS

Preparing our Hearts  
for Christmas



**CHURCH OF  
ST MARY OF THE ANGELS**  
LITURGY & PRAYER

*Painting by James Tissot  
(1836-1902)*



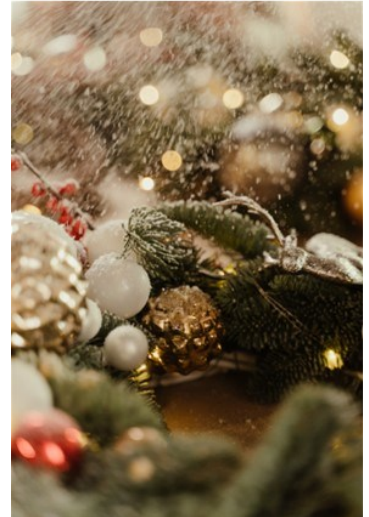
# Family-based Activities

## Advent Wreath

### Origin & Background

The Advent Wreath has always been associated with Advent. Its actual origins are uncertain but it may be that pre-Christian Germanic people once used wreaths with lit candles during the cold and dark December days as a sign of hope in the future warm and bright days of Spring.

The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolises the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ.



By the Middle Ages, the Christians adapted this tradition and used Advent wreaths as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. After all, Christ is “the Light that came into the world” to dispel the darkness of sin and to radiate the truth and love of God (cf. John 3:19-21). By 1600, both Catholics and Lutherans had more formal practices surrounding the Advent wreath.

### *Symbolism of the Advent Wreath*

The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns. The wreath of evergreens depicts the hope of newness and of renewal. It represents the immortality of our soul and the everlasting life promised to us through Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, who entered our world becoming true man, and who was victorious over sin and death through His passion, death, and resurrection.



## Advent Wreath – Prayers

On the First Sunday of Advent, the father (or any other member of the family) blesses the wreath, praying:

*“O God, by whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth Your blessing upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from You abundant graces. Who live and reign forever. Amen.”*



The youngest member of the family (or anyone else) then lights one purple candle.

### More Resources

#### [Creating an Advent Wreath](https://youtu.be/UqIOwrytqWw)

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#### [Blessing & Prayer for Advent Wreath](https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/prayers/view.cfm?id=952)

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/prayers/view.cfm?id=952>

#### [Advent Wreath Prayer](https://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/english2/p02032.htm)

<https://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/english2/p02032.htm>

## The Advent Candles

Four candles (traditionally 3 purple and 1 pink) stand in the circle and each one represents one of the four Sundays of Advent. One is lit on every Sunday of Advent so that during the last week before Christmas all four candles are lit.

The last (fifth) central candle representing Christ, is lit on Christmas Day.

***Candles symbolise the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son, Jesus.***



<b>Week 1: The Candle of HOPE</b> <b>Purple</b> <i>Prophet</i>	As we look this candle, we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ.
<b>Week 2: The Candle of PEACE</b> <b>Purple</b> <i>Bethlehem</i>	As we look at this candle, we celebrate the peace that is brought by the birth of Jesus.
<b>Week 3: The Candle of JOY</b> <b>Pink</b> <i>Shepherd</i>	As we look at this candle, we celebrate the joy we find in Jesus Christ.
<b>Week 4: The Candle of LOVE</b> <b>Purple</b> <i>Angel</i>	As we look at this candle, we celebrate the love of Christ for the world.
<b>Week 5: The Christ Candle</b> <b>White</b> <i>Birth of Christ</i>	The flame of this candle reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world. If we follow Him, we will never walk in darkness, but have the true light of life. It is lit on Christmas Eve or Day to show that the light of Christ has come into the world in fulfillment of the prophecies.

***Lighting the candles each week represents the progressive departure of darkness from the world as more and more light shines through the candles.***

## Nativity Crib

### Origin & Background

St. Francis of Assisi, who made the first crib, may have wanted to emphasise the poor and humble circumstances in which Jesus was born. The devotion goes back to the early days of the Church, when the actual site of Christ's birth and the clay manger in which he lay were venerated in Bethlehem. Later on, a silver manger substituted the clay one, and eventually a basilica was built over the site. Copies of this crib spread to Rome and all over the Christian world.



Veneration expanded through the centuries. The crib that was used at Christmas might be a model of the manger, or a painting of the Nativity. Various ceremonies grew up around it, until by the 13th century they evolved into theatrical drama and opera, with folk-dancing included. Then Pope Honorius stopped everything. 16 years later, St. Francis was allowed to make a wooden manger, fill it with hay, place an ox and donkey nearby, for people to gather and sing carols in honour of the birth of Jesus.



Today, the custom of having a crib in the home has been revived. We can buy a crib set or make one as a family. Why not design and make your own crib figures entirely? They may be drawn and glued on cardboard, carved or modelled or even created as puppets. If there are children at home, their dolls can be used.

## Nativity Crib – Get Creative!

The use and design of the crib depends on different artistic and cultural traditions. Some set up a simple crib long before Christmas, add more figures as Christmas approaches, with the baby Jesus placed in the manger only on Christmas Eve, and the wise men during Epiphany.



### A Bed of Straws for Baby Jesus

Younger children love making Jesus a birthday present, and there is a great Advent custom helps them visualise their efforts. Each day a piece of “straw” or soft yarn can be placed in a tiny crib at the child's bedside. On Christmas morning, a little figure of the baby Jesus lying on the “soft bed” helps to show symbolically the usefulness of these gifts and Christ's pleasure in receiving them.



Older children can prepare a series of posters for the family bulletin board to help explore the messages of the season. Coloured construction paper, clippings from newspapers, magazines, headlines, words and letters, snapshots, maps—anything that would serve in a montage arrangement can be used to illustrate the different comings.

The “straw” can be made from strips of coloured paper. Family members can write their intentions, prayers or sacrifices for Advent during each weekly reflection and place them in the crib. The penances of Advent (self-denials, extra tasks, good works, alms, prayers) not only strengthens our wills, but are a part of the offering of self that we make to Christ at His great Christmas Mass, the celebration of His birthday. These pieces of paper could also be part of the decorations on the Christmas tree.

## Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree is an old tradition depicting the relationship of Jesus with Jesse and other biblical figures who were the ancestors of Jesus.

The Jesse tree involves homemade ornaments that are hung on a small tree. The ornaments represent an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus, or they may represent ancient ancestors in the lineage of Jesus. Jesse was the father of King David. He is often looked upon as the first person in the genealogy of Jesus.



For your own Jesse Tree, a branch can be placed into a pot or a large vase at the beginning of Advent and every day a new ornament can be hung onto it. There are many resources, templates and variations on the internet for you to choose from.

## O Antiphons

There are seven short verses sung before the Magnificat during Evening Prayer of the Church on the seven days before Christmas (17—23 Dec). They each begin with the exclamation "O". Each of them ends with a plea for the Messiah to come. As Christmas approaches the cry becomes more urgent.

The antiphons were composed in the 7th or 8th century when monks put together texts from the Old Testament which looked forward to the coming of our salvation. They form a rich mosaic of scriptural images.



## Parish Resources

Check out St Mary's  
**Jesse Tree & O Antiphon**  
Videos here!

