

# THE YEAR OF DISCIPLESHIP

## Celebrating Advent to the Fullest

Does it seem to you that each year the holiday season gets busier and busier, and we get further and further away from the true meaning of Christmas?

The best way to combat this tendency is to adopt or renew Advent traditions in the home. Here are 12 great ideas to celebrate Advent to the fullest.

1. **Advent Wreath:** Each Sunday of Advent one of the candles is lit and special prayers are said with a particular theme leading up to the birth of Christ.
2. **Advent Dinners:** Make the Sundays of Advent into something special. Prepare a nice dinner or host a potluck and invite over family & friends.
3. **Prepare Seasonal Food:** Many historically Catholic countries have traditions of preparing food that goes with the liturgical seasons, especially Advent and Christmas. Catholic bloggers are doing a great job of making these traditions more popular for all Catholics.
4. **Advent Devotional Reading:** Subscribe to Dynamic Catholic daily emails or pick up a Little Black Book in the narthex for short daily readings.
5. **Advent Calendars:** Counting down the days to Christmas helps us, and children especially, to anticipate patiently and to focus on waiting for the baby Jesus to be born.
6. **Advent Music:** Make your own playlist of music appropriate for Advent, which anticipates Christ's birth.
7. **Nativity Scenes:** To make the display especially poignant, wait until Christmas Eve to place the Baby Jesus into the scene.
8. **Jesse Tree:** The **Jesse Tree** (named after the father of King David, the ancestor of Jesus, Isaiah 11) is a fun biblical activity during the Advent season that goes through the ancestry of Jesus and how all of his ancestors played a role in salvation history.
9. **Advent Penance Services:** Many Catholic parishes have special penance services for Advent. Confession is an important part of preparing room for the coming of Christ into our hearts.
10. **Almsgiving:** Advent is a great time to practice spiritual and corporeal acts of mercy such as Christmas gifts for disadvantaged children, volunteering at a nursing home or soup kitchen, or visiting the sick in a hospital.

11. **Celebrate the Advent Saint Feast Days:** St. Nicholas Day is on 12/06, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (a Holy Day of Obligation) is 12/08, Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast Day is 12/12, and St. Lucy's Feast Day is 12/13.
12. **Adopt a Cultural Tradition:** The Oplatki Christmas wafer from Eastern Europe, La Posada from Latin American countries, and Simbang Gabi from the Philippines are great traditions.

Hopefully these ideas have given you inspiration to celebrate Advent in a new and deeper way this year.