

A LIGHT

The First Sunday

IN THE DARKNESS

The Kingdom of God Is Near

Luke 21:25–28, 34–36

What if you made this Advent season radically different?

This is a very busy time of year. There's shopping, baking, social commitments at work and with family and friends, decorating, special events to attend ... but as Jesus reminds us in this week's Gospel, the Son of Man is coming. And there's no date set in stone and no Google Calendar reminder to announce the Second Coming. We have to live like we're ready, all of the time. "Beware that your hearts do not become ... [anxious] of daily life, and that day does not catch you by surprise like a trap" (v. 34).

Running from commitment to obligation doesn't leave much room for joy and praise, peace and prayer. So this Advent, start your planning with a blank slate. Will Christmas still come even if you don't exchange presents with your siblings? Who says you have to have a tree? What are your Advent essentials?

Then, with great deliberation, write in only those activities and traditions that are most precious — the things that make your heart feel full of love for God and for your neighbor. Do only these, and do them with joy. During Advent, live as if you were going to meet Jesus each and every day.



ADVENT Prayer



**“For you I wait
all day long”**

— Psalm 25:5

*Dear Lord, please flood
me with your peace
so that when I'm
surrounded
by the busyness of the
Christmas season,
I can remain ready to
meet you.
Amen*

INSPIRATION FOR THE SEASON



Saint Nicholas – December 6

The real Saint Nicholas was a bishop in the first part of the fourth century in what is today Turkey. He was known to be kind and generous to people in need: Legend has it that he tossed a bag of gold coins into the window of a poor merchant's home one night so that the merchant's eldest daughter would have a dowry and could marry. He did the same the next year for the middle daughter, and again the following year for the third daughter. Many families today celebrate Saint Nicholas' feast day on December 6. Children set out shoes the night before, hoping to find them filled with coins (or gold-foil-wrapped chocolate coins).

Catechism CONNECTION

“Though already present in the Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled ‘with power and great glory’ by the king's return to earth.”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 671



Daily LIVING

“Advent is here. What a marvelous time in which to renew your desire, your nostalgia, your real longing for Christ to come — for him to come every day to your soul in the Eucharist. The Church encourages us: *Ecce veniet!* — He is about to arrive!”

— *Saint Josemaría Escrivá*

FAMILY FOCUS

Shine a Light for Christ

Traditionally, Advent begins on the first of the four Sundays before Christmas, with the lighting of a purple candle set in a wreath, accompanied by prayers and, sometimes, song. On the Second Sunday of Advent, two purple candles are lit. On the Third Sunday of Advent, two purple candles and a pink candle are lit. And on the fourth Sunday, all four candles burn.

Make time each day during Advent to light the candle(s) for that week. Pause to meditate on and pray about the day ahead or behind you. As you watch the flame leap and dance, consider whether you live as a light in the world, shining Jesus' bright and steady love through the clutter and consumerism.

ADVENT Wreath Prayer

Say this prayer every time you light your Advent wreath throughout the season.

*Come, Lord Jesus!
Fill us with your love.*



FOR REFLECTION:

If Jesus were coming today, would he look at our actions and say, “Well done”? What have we done for the least of our brothers and sisters, and thus for him?