

# Advent Prayer

By Henri Nouwen

Master of both the light and the darkness,  
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations  
for Christmas. We who have so much to do  
and 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.

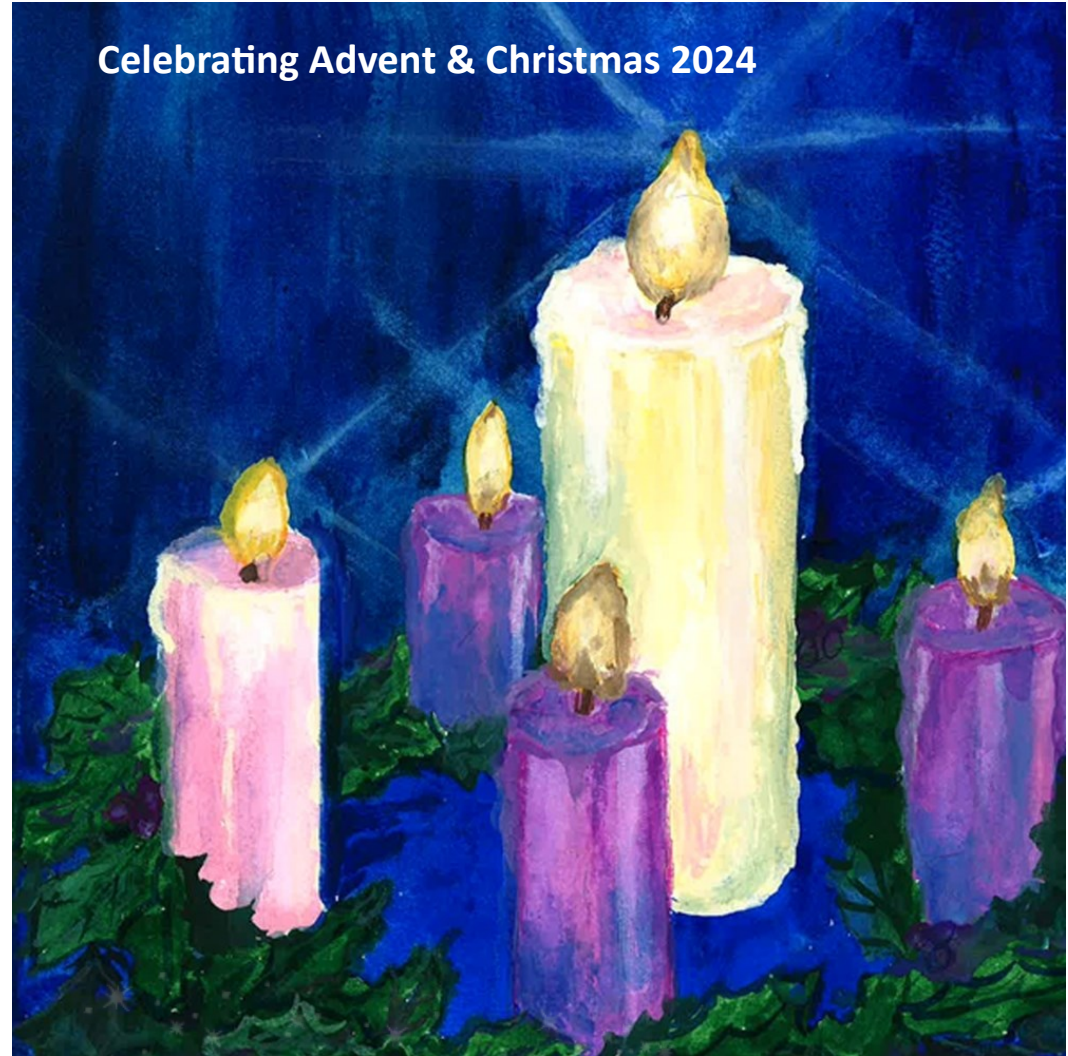
To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Amen.



# Saint Raphael Parish

Celebrating Advent & Christmas 2024



# Advent Essentials



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Display an Advent wreath in a prominent place in your house! If you don't have an Advent wreath at home, you can make one using the following materials:

1. Evergreen Wreath;
2. 3 Purple colored candles;
3. 1 Rose colored candle;
4. Manger scene to place in center of wreath.

Did you know that each element of the Advent wreath is symbolic of something?! Read about the symbols below to learn about what each means!

**Circle & Evergreen Wreath:** The circle of the evergreen wreath is unending. There is no beginning and no end. This is symbolic of the eternity of God. The evergreen that is used is symbolic of life and immortality.

**Four Candles:** Each one of the four candles that is placed around the Advent wreath symbolizes each week of the Advent season. The purple candles represent: prayer, penance and preparation and are lit on the first, second and fourth weeks of Advent. The pink candle represents joy and is lit on the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday!

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**Advent is a beautiful season that helps us to prepare for the coming of our Lord at Christmas! Here are some ways to make Jesus part of your Christmas celebrations:**

1. **Go to Mass with your family.** At Saint Raphael Parish, we will have Mass at 4pm on Christmas Eve and at 9:30am on Christmas Day! We hope you can join us!
2. **Have a family Christmas pageant.** At home, parents can be the narrator (one version: John 2: 1-20) while children play the parts of Mary, Joseph, the Inn-keeper, and Three Wisemen.
3. **Have a Christmas Sing-A-Long** around your Christmas tree. Include religious carols and hymns in your playlist, as well as the favorite popular tunes!
4. **Start your gift exchange thanking God** for all of the good things that you have.
5. **Make a Birthday Cake for Jesus** and sing happy birthday to him.
6. **Enjoy time with your family**, sip some hot cocoa and enjoy a Christmas movie together with a big bowl of popcorn. Here are some classic Christmas movies:  
*The Nativity Story*  
*It's a Wonderful Life*  
*Miracle on 34th Street*  
*The Ultimate Gift*  
*The Muppet Christmas Carol*  
*The Star*  
*The Grinch who Stole Christmas*  
*A Christmas Carol*



# Advent Feast Days



## December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a title of Mary, mother of Jesus. It is associated with a series of apparitions which occurred in December during the sixteenth century. The Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego four times. According to accounts, Mary asked Juan Diego to have a church built in her honor at the site she appeared to him. The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated in parishes across the country with Masses, dancing and celebration. The biggest celebration takes place at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

## December 13: Saint Lucy Day

Saint Lucy is a Roman Christian Martyr. Her traditional feast day is known as Saint Lucy's Day, and is celebrated on December 13th. According to legend, Saint Lucy brought food and aid to Christians hiding in the Roman Catacombs, wearing a candle-lit wreath on her head to light the way and leave her hands free to carry as much food as possible. Her feast day falls during the season of Advent and is a precursor of Christmas, pointing to the arrival of the light of Christ. This feast day is popular among Italians and Scandinavians—each emphasizing a different aspect of her story.



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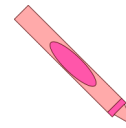
**Take time to pray!** The Advent season is a time of preparation. We prepare for the coming of our Lord at Christmas in various ways.

We take the time to come to Mass and celebrate and worship God together.

We decorate our homes, little by little, with reminders (ex: Advent Wreath, Nativity Scenes) of what we are truly celebrating.

We take the time to be generous towards one another and to be grateful for all the things that we have.

We make extra time to spend with friends and family, doing things together that bring us joy and peace and that are fun.



## Family Activity

**Set up a Nativity Scene:** Make the **nativity scene** the first thing you set up before displaying any other Christmas decorations and make it the last one you take down, leaving it up until the feast of the Epiphany. Having a child's set can be a great way for families to remember the story of Jesus' birth and for young children to play with and use to act out the Christmas story.





# Celebrating the Season

**There are so many things we can do to celebrate Advent at home! Here are some ways you and your family can celebrate this beautiful season:**

1. Read the Sunday Readings as a family and discuss what they mean for you.
2. Color and cut these [O Antiphons](#) and use them to decorate your Advent wreath. The O Antiphons are the ancient titles for Jesus. We hear them when we sing the hymn, *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*.
3. Create and decorate a Jesse Tree. A Jesse Tree is like Jesus' family tree, which recounts the story of salvation. Color and cut out these [Jesse Tree ornaments](#) and place them on a simple branch. You can use the Jesse Tree as centerpiece.
4. Mix some Advent Music into your favorite playlist. Check out our very own parish [Spotify playlist](#) for Advent!
5. Take part in a service activity this Advent. Whether that be visiting residents in a nursing home or donating a gift item for someone in need. There are so many ways that we can share the light of Christ with others. Here are some ideas for [Advent Acts of Kindness!](#)
6. Learn about Advent traditions that are practiced in other cultures. For example, Las Posadas is an Hispanic tradition which is a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for an inn.

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## Advent Feast Days



### December 5: Saint Nicholas Day

Saint Nicholas of Myra was an early Christian Bishop from Myra, which was located in Asia Minor (present day Turkey). His legendary habit of gift-giving gave rise to the traditional model of Santa Clause ("Saint Nick"). His feast is observed on December 5th or 6th in Western Countries and on December 19th in Eastern Countries. In parts of Northern Europe, St. Nicholas Day has remained a tradition, when children are given special cookies, candies, and gifts. In many place, children leave letters for St. Nicholas and carrots and grass for his donkey. In the morning, they find small presents under their pillows or in their shoes. Oranges and chocolate coins are common treats.

### December 8: Immaculate Conception

On December 8, we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. While this feast day falls during the Season of Advent, it is really a feast day in reference to Mary's conception and not that of Jesus'. Below is a short prayer that you can pray with your family on December 8th!

*Holy Spirit, draw me closer to Mary so that she might draw me closer to God.*

