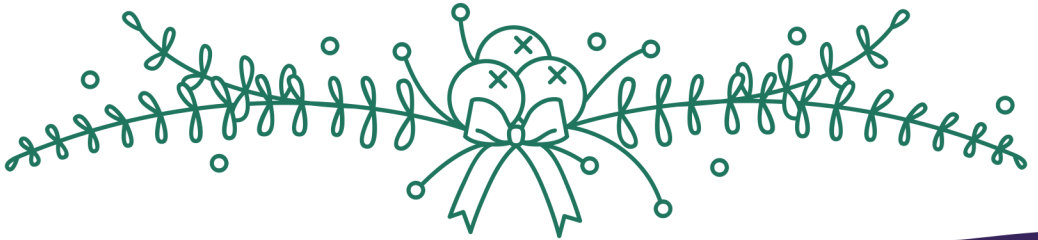


Holy-days at Home

Prayers and practices for Advent,
Christmas & Epiphany

Year A

Created by Rev. Leah Wall



Family Leadership Network
NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE



The Annunciation in Armenian art by Toros Taronetsi, 1323



Advent Preface

Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great glory to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

Prayers & Practices for Advent

4 weeks of fasting

Purple is for Preparation

The hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. Romans 13:11 (b)

Advent Family Prayer

In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah 40:3

Our King and Savior now draws near: *

O Come, let us adore him.

Respond with a Psalm:

Week 1: Psalm 122

Week 2: Psalm 72:1-15

Week 3: Psalm 146

Week 4: Psalm 24

A Reading from Holy Scripture:

Week 1: Romans 13:8-14

Week 2: Romans 15:1-13

Week 3: James 5:7-20

Week 4: Romans 1:1-7

Respond by praying together: The Lord's Prayer

Collect of the week (found on pages 598-599):

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.



Practices

The four weeks of Advent are sometimes observed with these themes:

Week 1: The Patriarchs

Week 2: The Prophets

Week 3: John the Baptist

Week 4: The Virgin Mary

The Patriarchs often center on Abraham and David, but include many other fathers of our faith up to Joseph, who illuminates and beautifies our conception of what a patriarch can be.

The Prophets remind us that those who listen carefully can hear the voice of God. Our creeds proclaim our belief that the Holy Spirit has spoken through them. Because of this, we listen closely to their words.

John the Baptist faithfully proclaimed the coming Savior even from before he was born.

The Virgin Mary, whose yes changed the course of history and by whom, with the Holy Spirit, Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, completes these Advent themes.

There are many common Advent practices: fasting, prayer, and acts of generosity. Many people keep an Advent wreath in their home, attend a Lessons & Carols service, and conclude the 4 week Advent season by participating in a candlelight vigil on the eve of Christmas.

The Jesse Tree is an ancient practice recalling a Messianic prophecy of Isaiah's (Isaiah 11:1) through illumination, hymns, art, or decorations.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

As we observe Advent, we join with all of those who celebrate God's faithfulness across 4,000 years of history. We recall many of the special Holy people and moments through time. Loyola Press is a reliable online resource for further information on a family Jesse Tree.

Using the Calendar of Holy Days (beginning on page 691 of the BCP), the church remembers some saints with festive traditions! Books, like *To Dance with God* by Gertrud Nelson, help families incorporate these celebrations at home. Online resources like *The Homely Hours*, *Little Way Chapel*, and *Anglican Compass* offer information and ideas.

Some of the most richly remembered saints in this season are:

November 30: Andrew, the Apostle

December 6: Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (Santa Claus)

December 13: Lucy, Martyr at Syracuse

December 21: Thomas, the Apostle



Beginning December 16, the daily "O Antiphons" (Calendar of Holy Days, page 712) can be used. An antiphon is simply a short proclamation with a response. The church has used the "O antiphons" since at least the 5th century. Families can continue to use them by reading the prophecy that is listed in the BCP. You could also sing the accompanying verse of the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel". The Messianic Antiphons could also become tree ornaments, cookies or be made into simple crafts. An ancient practice is to give small gifts based on the antiphons to one another during this week leading up to Christmas. The acrostic of the antiphons forms (in Latin) the phrase "Truly, tomorrow." So we proclaim with a building excitement:

Truly, tomorrow!

Prayers & Practices for Christmas

12 days: December 25 - January 5

White is for Celebration

Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 2:11

Christmastide Family Prayer

Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. Revelation 21:3

Alleluia, to us a child is born: *

O come, let us adore him. Alleluia.

Respond with a Psalm (choose 1):

Psalm 96

Psalm 97

Psalm 84

Psalm 98

Psalm 147:12-20

Psalm 8

A Reading from Holy Scripture:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Galatians 4:4-5

Respond by praying together: The Lord's Prayer

Collect of the week (found on pages 600 - 601):

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Practices

"This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
Let's rejoice and be glad in His salvation."

Isaiah 25:9b



The twelve days of Christmas begin with a vigil on Christmas Eve. Common Christmas practices involve lighting a Christ Candle on Christmas morning and every day through Christmastide. After the advent candles & greenery are put away, this Christ candle can continue to be used until Good Friday. A twelfth night party can help keep the celebration going and offer a reminder to continue rejoicing. Other practices include singing of carols, feasting, or observing Christmas lights.

Many Holy moments and people are remembered by the church during these days. Consider learning about them and enriching your celebration of Christmastide with them through prayer, activities, art or song.

December 26: Stephen, deacon & martyr

December 27: John, apostle & evangelist

December 28: The Holy Innocents (for families with older children)

January 1: The circumcision and Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Some recommended family reading for Advent and Christmas:

Saint Nicholas, Ned Bustard

God's Holy Darkness, Sharei Green

Refuge, Anne Booth

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Tomie dePaola

The End of the Fiery Sword, Maura Roan McKeegan

Prayers & Practices for Epiphany

January 6 - Ash Wednesday

Liturgical color after the 1st Sunday is green: ordinary time

Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together,
they come to you. Isaiah 60:4

Epiphany Family Prayer

Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Isaiah 60:3

The Lord has shown forth His glory: *

O come, let us adore him. Alleluia.

Respond with a Psalm using the lectionary beginning on page 738 or choose from the following:

Psalm 72

Psalm 89:1-29

Psalm 40:1-11

Psalm 139:1-18

Psalm 37:1-11

Psalm 27

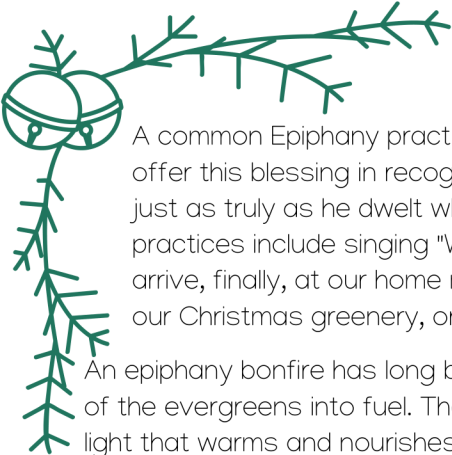
A Reading From Holy Scripture:

Matthew 2:1-12 or other of your choice or using the lectionary (pages 718 and following)

Respond by praying together: The Lord's Prayer

Collect: (a new one for each week is found on pages 601 - 604)

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Practices

A common Epiphany practice is the blessing of the house. We offer this blessing in recognition that Jesus dwells in our homes just as truly as he dwelt where the Magi came to worship. Other practices include singing "We Three Kings" or having the Magi arrive, finally, at our home nativity scenes, having a bonfire with our Christmas greenery, or taking a stargazing walk.

An epiphany bonfire has long been used to symbolize the transformation of the evergreens into fuel. Their festive branches change into a powerful light that warms and nourishes, even on a dark and cold winter night.

Consider inviting friends or neighbors over to share the light from your Christmas tree & greenery.

A prayer at the bonfire:

O God, who once sent heavenly flames upon Elijah's offering, guided the Israelites through the wilderness with a fiery pillar, led the wise men from the East to the abode of Wisdom through a brilliant star, spoke to Moses through a burning bush, and fulfilled the prophecy of John the Forerunner by sending Christ, who bestows both the Holy Spirit and the fire of passion through baptism: remind us of the true Light who came into the world, and who ignites us with the Holy Spirit to lead us on our pilgrimage with the fire of his Love; through Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



As families, we might consider how to be increasingly hospitable: both by giving and receiving. By this lifestyle, we continue in the footsteps of the Magi and their search for the Christ child, we celebrate the joy of Jesus' appearance, and we find God at a surprisingly familiar place: the table.

The church remembers Jesus' baptism as well as the calling of the disciples, the many miracles of Jesus & the Transfiguration during this season. As a church, we remember how far the voice of God reaches and how far God's light shines on World Mission Sunday.

The small single lights of Advent, burning in the darkness have continued to grow. We have seen the bright light of the coming of Jesus lifted up at Christmas. During epiphany, we consider the light of the cosmos and how far the Great Light shines. And on February 2, the church remembers the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. Traditionally, candles for home worship were lit and entrusted to the church for us to continue to spread the light of Christ wherever we are. Therefore, we annually experience the light of longing grow to the incarnation, a light for the whole world, and it is this same light we are granted to continue in.

**O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son
revealed his glory upon the holy mountain:**

**Grant that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance,
may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his
likeness from glory to glory... Amen.**

from the collect for the last Sunday of Epiphany (pg. 604)



The Tree of Jesse from the Hamburg Altar, Absolon Stumme 1499





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