

ARCHDIOCESAN ADVENT ADVENTURES

CELEBRATING ADVENT AS A FAMILY

It is Our hope that the ideas and suggestions laid out in this booklet, inspire you to celebrate the full season of Advent and that this in turn brings you joy whilst creating shared memories that your family will treasure.



Advent means ‘arrival’ or ‘presence’. In the season of Advent we prepare to celebrate not only Jesus’ birth but his presence in the family, in the love we share.

We recall the past, celebrate the present, and look to the future with hope.

We await the coming of the light that will shine in the darkness, shining light on our path of peace.



In preparation for Advent

These activities could form a family fun weekend to 'kick start' Advent, whilst creating some shared family memories; though you can also dip in and out of these during Advent.... Whatever suits your family.

- Making an Advent wreath
- Making of the empty manger
- Making an Advent paper chain
- Preparing a Jesse tree



Activities to do throughout Advent

- ✝ Gathering together around your Advent wreath to light the candles, reflect and spend time together.
- ✝ Preparing the empty manger for the arrival of baby Jesus
- ✝ Undoing the paper chain
- ✝ Dressing the Jesse Tree
- ✝ Bambellini Blessing
- ✝ Making biscuit tree decorations

Other things your family could make or do

Make stars or buy them and write on them what you can do in Advent to make things better for someone!

Challenge family members with a quiz and puzzles

Make angels to decorate your home

Make cards to send to family and friends

Light a candle daily or each week and remember members of our family by name (Dead or alive)

Make a paper lantern (Polish Tradition)

There are downloadable resources on [our website](#).

Advent Wreath

Making an Advent wreath as a family can be a fun way to start the season and preparations for Christmas.

Place the wreath in a prominent place and once a week gather the family around it, perhaps before or after a family meal. Light a candle on each Sunday, saying a short prayer like this:

“ Lord God, bless this wreath and bless us as well. ”
May this wreath remind us of the hope and joy that Jesus brings us into the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

- Maybe you could sing a verse of “O Come, O Come Emanuel”
- or read a Bible passage e.g. Isaiah 11:1-4,61:1-2; Mark 1:1-8; James 5:7-10 or Philippians 4 :4-7.



Directions for making an Advent wreath can be [downloaded here](#).

On the first Sunday light one of the purple candles; light two purple candles the second week, two purple candles and the pink candle the third week, and all four candles the last week.

What does it all mean?

- The evergreen leaves symbolize the promised new life in Jesus.
- The circle symbolizes God’s eternal love for us, with no beginning and no end.
- The light of the candles represents Jesus, who brings light into the darkness.
- The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent.

Purple is a sign of penance, and
rose or pink is a sign of the joy to come.

You may like to put a white candle in the centre of the wreath and light it on Christmas day.

The third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete or Rejoicing Sunday.

The Empty Manger

Using cardboard or paper, make a manger in readiness for Jesus' birth on Christmas Day.

Each child may have their own individual manger, or there may be one manger for the whole family. The idea is, during Advent, to reward good deeds (acts of service, sacrifice, or kindness) done for someone (parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, teachers etc) by placing a strand of the straw (maybe strands of material, wool or string) in the empty manger. By Christmas Day you will have made a comfy bed for Baby Jesus to lie in.

A crib template can be downloaded [here](#), or you can design your own. There are also instructions for making a '[Sock Baby Jesus](#)'.



Encourage your children to make Jesus' bed as comfortable as possible through their good deeds; the more good deeds, the more comfortable the manger will be. In the process, explain Christ's incomparable self-gift at Christmas and Easter that enables us to be part of God's family.

Don't put Baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Day.

Advent Paper Chain

To make an Advent paper chain, you will need;

- **Strips of purple paper** – 7 strips for the first week of Advent +7 for the second week, and + however many days there are before Christmas day for the fourth week
- **Strips of pink paper** – you will need 7 strips for the third week of Advent.
- **White** – you will need 1 strip for Christmas day.

Then;

- Write prayers and/or deeds on to the coloured strips of paper.
- Link all the strips together in the correct colour order for Advent; 7 purple for week one, another 7 purple for week 2, 7 pink for week 3, then the remaining purple and the white for Christmas day at the very end.

To use the paper chain;

- Starting at the purple end of the chain, tear off one link each day and try to carry out the suggestion or pray the prayer printed on it.



There are printable paper chains pages available [here](#).



Preparing a Jesse Tree

The Jesse tree represents Jesus' family tree.

The name is taken from Isaiah 11:1, in which Jesus is referred to as a shoot coming up from the stump of Jesse, the father of David.

The ornaments/symbols on the Jesse tree tell of Jesus' ancestors, and of the events leading to Jesus' birth.

A simple way of creating your own Jesse Tree is to place a branch in a vase and decorate it with the symbols, which can be added each day throughout Advent.

There is a downloadable copy of suggested [symbols](#) here (or you can print your own), as well as a [booklet of reflections](#).

Advent Jar of Love

- Find a jar and decorate it.
- Get a lolly stick or wooden stick or strip of paper, one for each day of December or Advent.
- Parents to write, on each stick or strip of paper, either an activity to do as a family or something to do for someone, including some treats, such as;
 - Do a good turn for someone in your class,
 - Help a little more at home,
 - Choose what you want for tea,
 - Have an extra story.

Parents can be as creative as they like.

Each day of advent you can pull out a stick/paper and do whatever it says!

Setting Up The Crib

When setting up your crib this year, why not try to make it a representation of the Nativity story.



- Make sure there is no one in the stable, except the animals, until Christmas Eve.
- Have Mary and Joseph journey through the house from a nearby point, say from the hall to the living room, if that is where you set up your crib. Move them a little nearer to the crib each day but make sure they don't arrive at the stable until Christmas Eve.
- You could also have the shepherds elsewhere in the house until Christmas Day when they arrive to visit Baby Jesus.
- The Kings could journey through your house from the farthest point to where you have set up the crib. Again move them a little closer each day, but don't forget they don't arrive at the stable to adore Jesus until Epiphany (6th January).
- Place baby Jesus* in the manger on Christmas Day.

You could make a little ceremony out of this and let the youngest child in the house place Jesus in the manger whilst singing an appropriate carol, eg. 'Away in a Manger'.

*see the Bamanelli Sunday celebrations which might add to this occasion.

Bambellini Blessing

The Third Sunday of Advent is the traditional day when the children of Rome bring the Baby Jesus statues from their Nativity Scenes at home to St. Peter's Square to be blessed by the Pope during the Sunday Angelus. The day is affectionately known as "Bambinelli Sunday."



This Vatican tradition was started by Pope Paul VI in 1969 and ever since, the Bambinelli blessing has been given by the pope during the Angelus in St. Peter's Square on the Third Sunday of Advent. It's a teachable moment for families to refocus children on the true meaning of the Advent season.

All are invited to bring the Baby Jesus figure from their homes to Mass on Gaudate Sunday to be blessed. Families can even make their own "Bambellini".

A suggestion is, following the blessing, take your "Bambellini", home, place it in a box, wrap it and save it for Christmas. This could be the first gift your family opens on Christmas Day, when together you place your Baby Jesus figure in the crib, and have a home blessing of the Nativity for your whole family.

This could maybe be something that the family does following Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Biscuits

If you want to bake some biscuits to decorate ready for Christmas, here is a simple recipe:

Christmas, here is a simple recipe:

150g plain flour, 100g margarine, 50g caster sugar

1. Heat oven to gas mark 4/180°C
2. Cream margarine and sugar until light and fluffy
3. Fold in the flour
4. Pull together and knead gently
5. Roll out on a lightly floured board and cut shapes; use a star shaped cutter or any other festive shapes
6. Place on baking tray.
7. Bake in oven until slightly golden. The biscuits will still be soft when removed from the oven
8. Place on a rack to cool.
9. Once cool, decorate with any combination of icing and sweets to make your biscuits special
10. The biscuits could be used to decorate your Christmas tree
 - a. Either placed in small clear bags and hung on the tree or
 - b. By pushing a hole through, the top of each uncooked dough shape and threading ribbon through the hole once cooked and then hang them on the tree.



Always ask an adult to help you when using the oven.

We have uploaded some quizzes, puzzles and liturgy ideas to our website, which are free to download.

These include: [Jesse Tree reflections and symbols](#) & How to make a 'Sock Baby Jesus'

Each year **Mission Together** produce engaging and fun resources to help children keep Jesus at the heart of this exciting season; these resources are [free to download](#) and include scripture, prayer, craft activities and a call to action, e.g. Advent Calendar. [Mission Together's Advent Symbolism quiz](#) is also available to download.

CatholicMom, in partnership with many other ministries, offer [resources](#) to help to support Catholic families.

The Kids Friendly Team have written resources based on their churches' stories and experiences. These '[home-grown](#)' resources are free to download, share and enjoy.

We have included an Advent Prayer Walk, adapted from the Kids Friendly team's resource, on our website for use at home.

Loving Father,

Help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love
all over the world.

Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings,
teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy
to be thy children,
Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.



*A Christmas Prayer by
Robert Louis Stevenson*

The Family Life Worker and the Family Life Commission for the Archdiocese of Cardiff hope that this resource is helpful to you and your family in helping you create some shared faith-based memories in the comfort of your own home.

If you would like to know more about the work of the Family Life Team please do not hesitate to contact

Joanne White

Archdiocesan Marriage & Family Life Worker/ Co-ordinator

Tel: (029)20 365964 E-mail - parenting@rcadc.org

Or by post c/o Pastoral Resources Centre,
910 Newport Road, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 4LL
Website www.rcadc.org/mfl/

Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge our colleagues of the Marriage and Family Life Commission for the Wrexham Diocese who shared their Advent Family Day experiences and resources with us.