



Advent means "coming" and is four weeks of preparing hearts and minds for Jesus who is at once with us and coming again.

The following ideas for celebrating Advent at home serve a two-fold purpose: to enrich the family's spiritual life while helping combat commercialism by placing the emphasis on Jesus' coming rather than on material goods.

Advent Wreath:

Make or purchase an advent wreath and place it on a table or in a special advent prayer space in your home. Light it daily at meal or bedtime and pray the weekly prayers together.

Advent Calendar:

Make or purchase a calendar with daily reminders of Jesus' coming. Open one door each day, emphasizing the good news the Christian tradition celebrates during this season. Check your local religious-goods store for a variety of calendar types.

Advent Chain:

Make small strips of purple paper available to family members in a box or basket. As each kind act or favor is done in your home, family members can add one link to the advent chain by gluing the strip into a circle and attaching it to the chain. Acts of service and sacrifice help prepare hearts for Jesus' coming.

Advent Scripture Reading:

Read the daily scripture for the Advent season. Many books are available with meditations on each day's reading, or ask the person who prints your parish

bulletin to list the daily scripture reading during Advent. Read them aloud so the whole family hears the good news of the season.

Straw for the Crib:

Place an empty crib in your special Advent space at home. Next to it, leave a basket of straw or narrow strips of paper. When family members do a kind deed or seek forgiveness from someone, they can add one piece of straw to the crib. By Christmas, the crib is softly lined and ready for Jesus. On Christmas Eve, place the Jesus figure in the crib thanking God for the gift of His Son, Jesus.

Tell the Story:

Encourage children to read and act out the Christmas story. Let each child have a nativity set of their own. Puppet plays or dress-up versions of the Bethlehem story help remind children of the real meaning of Christmas.

Reconcile Differences:

Prepare the way for Jesus' coming by asking and granting forgiveness among family members. Say an act of contrition together around the advent wreath and reflect together on how family

members treat one another. Ask forgiveness for hurts. Go to church together to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation during Advent. Also, Advent is a good time to renew a broken or hurting friendship or forgive a family feud.

Give to the Poor:

Select a local charity or cause to donate your sacrificial gifts during Advent. Decorate a box or jar to collect coins. Decide together what sacrifice will merit placing a coin into the jar: going without a movie or dessert, or turning off the TV for one night. You may also choose to drop in a coin for each act of kindness to a neighbor or friend.

Work for Peace:

To help prepare the way for the "Prince of Peace," involve your family in peace-making efforts outside your home. Write to your congressional representatives and senators about military spending. Join Bread for the World or another international organization that seeks peace through justice. Contact your local Peace and Justice office for ideas.

