

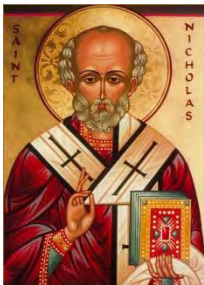
Make an Advent Calendar Using a Paper Chain

- Create a paper chain with the number of links equivalent to the number of days until Christmas. Add a scripture verse to the inside of each link. One link is removed each day, and the correlating scripture verse is read out loud with your children. (See the scripture verses listed above for the Jesse Tree.)
- For another variation on this Advent paper chain with actions for your kids to take each day, visit the following website: <http://catholicblogger1.blogspot.com/2011/10/2011-printable-advent-chain.html>



Use Your Christmas Cards to Pray for Those You Love

Take your Christmas cards from the prior year. Each day, take one card and pray for the person that sent it to you. If you do not have last year's cards, remember to save them this year!



Celebrate St. Nicholas Day

St. Nicholas is the Patron Saint of children, and his feast day is celebrated on December 6. In many European countries, the tradition is for children to leave their shoes on the fireplace hearth or outside their bedroom door on the evening of December 5. When they wake up in the morning, their shoes are filled with small religious items, fruit, candies, or other small gifts or treats.

Gift Ideas:

- Prayer cards
- A religious book
- Religious stickers or other small religious items
- A small sack of chocolate coins
- A rosary
- An orange or a tangerine
- A Christmas ornament
- Fuzzy socks
- Gift certificates



Click on the following link to learn more about St. Nicholas and this special Christmas tradition: <https://www.catholiccompany.com/getfed/st-nicholas-and-your-shoes/>

Prayer to St. Nicholas of Myra

O good St. Nicholas,
you who are the joy of the children,
put in my heart the spirit of childhood,
which the gospel speaks, and teach me to seed happiness around me.

You, whose feast prepares us for Christmas,
open my faith to the mystery of God made man.

You good bishop and shepherd,
help me to find my place in the Church
and inspire the Church to be faithful to the Gospel.

O good Saint Nicholas, patron of children, sailors and the helpless,
watch over those who pray to Jesus, your Lord and theirs,
as well as over those who humble themselves before you.

Bring us all in reverence to the Holy Child of Bethlehem,
when true joy and peace are found.
Amen.



Hang a Stocking for Jesus

Begin a new family tradition by hanging a special stocking for Jesus along with your family's other Christmas stockings. Ask your children do special acts of kindness for others throughout the season of Advent. Have them write the acts on small pieces of paper and tuck them into Jesus' stocking. What better gift could they give to Jesus on Christmas morning?

Letters on the Christmas Tree

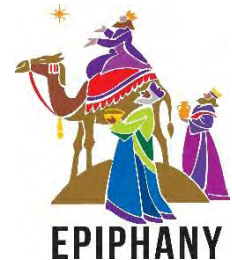
This is a special way to share the spirit of Christmas with others not only at Christmas time but throughout the entire year. The idea is to look for ways to help others. As the year goes along, keep a list of all the special things that you have done. In early to mid-December, write a letter explaining what you have done, how it made you feel and how it made the people that you were helping feel. This is a special project for every member of the family. On Christmas Eve, hang your letters on the Christmas tree. On Christmas morning, each person shares their letter out loud with the whole family. There are so many ways to help others – but why wait until Christmas? Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking:



- Visit patients at a Veteran’s Administration hospital.
- Sing Christmas carols at a nursing home.
- Donate books to women and children at a safe house.
- Help out at a soup kitchen or a food pantry.
- Pay a special visit to a family member or a neighbor who is not able to leave their home.
- Make some cards and deliver them to a children’s hospital to cheer up kids who are sick.
- Stuff warm socks with snacks and fruit to give to people who are homeless.
- Secretly rake leaves or shovel snow for a neighbor.

Traveling Wise Men

Let your children set out the three wise men (magi) for your Nativity set. Have them move them to another place around the house each week until they finally reach the Christmas stable on the Feast of Epiphany (January 6).



Light an Advent Wreath at Meal Time



1st Week of Advent:

Before the evening meal, the room could be in darkness. After a moment of quiet, someone lights one purple candle and says: Come, Lord, Jesus!

*All make the sign of the cross and answer: **Come quickly!***

Leader: Lord Jesus, open our minds and hearts and souls as we wait for you to be born in our lives and in our family. Help us to experience your love in our family today.

Family members each share one way they have experienced the love of the Lord in their home today.

Leader: As we prepare for the coming of your Son, O God, we give you thanks for the love of your son, Jesus, which we have experienced in our home today.

We give thanks for this food and drink, signs of your gracious love. May this meal strengthen us to share your gifts with the hungry and all who look for your justice and mercy. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

2nd Week of Advent:



Before the evening meal, the room could be in darkness. After a moment of quiet, someone lights two purple candle and says: Come, Lord, Jesus!

*All make the sign of the cross and answer: **Come quickly!***

Leader: Lord Jesus, bring peace and healing in our family and our world. May we hear again your own prayer, “that we may be one.” May we prepare the way for you by being generous and forgiving.

As we prepare for the coming of your Son, O God, we thank you for the blessing of your generosity and forgiveness.

We give you thanks for this food and drink, signs of your gracious love. May this meal strengthen us to be generous and forgiving. May it strengthen us to share our gifts with the hungry and all who look for your justice and mercy. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.



3rd Week of Advent:

Before the evening meal, the room could be in darkness. After a moment of quiet, someone lights two purple candles and the pink candle and says: Come, Lord, Jesus!

*All make the sign of the cross and answer: **Come quickly!***

*All respond after each invocation: **Come, Lord Jesus.***

Leader:

O Wisdom! ... (All: Come, Lord Jesus.)

O Light of dawn! ...

O Lord of might! ...

O Root of Jesse! ...

O Key of David! ...

O Desire of nations! ...

O Emmanuel! ...

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, in the food and in our sharing. Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are you as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ.

All conclude together: For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

4th Week of Advent:



Before the evening meal, the room could be in darkness. After a moment of quiet, someone lights all of the candles.

All: Come Lord Jesus! We hunger, we thirst, we wait for you! Come Lord Jesus and do not delay!

Leader: As we prepare for the coming of your Son, O God, we are hungry and thirsty for signs of his love in our lives. We give you thanks for this season of waiting and hopefulness for Jesus to be even more present in the life of this family. We give you thanks for this food and drink, signs of your gracious love. May this meal strengthen us to love each other and our neighbors as we wait for the coming of your Son, Jesus. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.



Begin, or continue, the practice of doing the “O Antiphons” – O Come, O Come Emmanuel – during Advent. Each verse is a poetic paraphrase of the prayers for each of the last seven days preceding Christmas – December 17-23. As described on the USCCB website, “They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative ‘Come!’ embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.” See the following link: <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=958>

Advent Reading

The Crippled Lamb, by Max Lucado

This is a story about a crippled lamb named Joshua who feels different from all of the other lambs. He can't run and play like they can. This makes him sad. As time goes along, Joshua finds out that God has a very special purpose for his life.

The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey, by Susan Wojciechowski

Jonathan is a wood carver who lives alone and never smiles. No one knows why he is so grouchy until one day Jonathan and his mother pay him a visit. Jonathan shares his story with them and makes a very special gift for Jonathan and his mother.

A Special Place for Santa, by Jeanne Pieper

Santa is sad because he doesn't want his gift giving to overshadow the birth of Jesus at Christmas. This is a wonderful story that ties St. Nick (Santa) to the true meaning of Christmas. The book ends with Santa in church, kneeling before the Baby Jesus and presenting him with a very special Christmas gift.

Suggestion: Read the book together on Christmas Eve and then have everyone in the family make their own list of nice things they have done throughout the year. Leave the lists by Santa's milk and cookies.