



Ten ways to Celebrate Advent at Home

Advent is a time of spiritual renewal as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. In what way will your home be 'different' because it's Advent? Try some of these practical ideas...

1. Light the Advent wreath

It's a very clear symbol that Advent is here! Unpack that Advent wreath, dust it off, or make a new one out of craft or natural materials. Use the wreath as a family gathering point and a call to prayer. Be faithful to lighting that new candle each week.

2. Use Advent symbols

Decorate your home in the spirit of Advent. A mauve table cloth, a banner, a child's artwork, a table centrepiece such as the Advent wreath. Refresh your home's 'sacred spaces' with some Advent imagination.

3. Show hospitality

Now that your home is decked out in sacred symbolism, fill it with warmth, prayer, laughter. Invite some parishioners over for an Advent meal or perhaps a night of faith sharing. Bask in the goodness of the body of Christ.

4. Family meals

Put extra effort into your family meals. For a start, be there! Pray grace together. Prepare a table topic: "If I could have three wishes this Christmas..."

5. Organize a family outreach

Is there a neighbour who could use some assistance? Is there a parish Christmas hamper to which we could contribute? A local nursing home we could visit? Find a way to share your family's wealth and talents so as to bring life to others in your local community.

6. Take time

Take time to nurture your key relationships. Cancel a work date to 'hang out' with your kids. Leave the shopping and write to a dear friend. Spend some precious, intimate time with your spouse. Or just sit in prayer and 'waste time' with God.

7. Feed your brain

Feeling a bit sluggish? Use Advent as a time to limber up, strength your faith, update your knowledge as a Catholic. Enroll in a short course. Do some spiritual exercises (do some physical exercises too!). Play an educative or prayerful CD in the car. Feed your brain. Nourish your soul.

8. Share your Advent activity

Involve your children or the whole family in making or doing something special during Advent. E.g., Make a nativity crib in the garden. Or share a simple treat on Sundays: ice cream cones after Mass, a family cricket match in the park, a walk in the sunshine.

9. Be reconciled

Prepare to receive the sacrament of reconciliation this Advent. Come before God with an honest and open heart, conscious of your brokenness and failures, yet confident in God's unconditional love and mercy. Is there someone to whom you need to say sorry?

10. Shop simply

Plan a strategy for your Christmas shopping this year. Rather than being swept along with the consumer tidal wave, make choices to simplify your lifestyle. Keep presents simple and shopping to a minimum. Give gifts of self (e.g., a gift of your time, affection, presence, prayer.)

Helpful Hint

To make Advent a priority in your busy life:

- Put it in the diary!
- Let go of a less important activity.
- Pray for the capacity to enter into the spirit of Advent. Or pray for the *desire* to celebrate Advent well.
- Team up with a friend or family member and support each other in your Advent goals.