

Keeping Advent

Greetings!

When I talk about Advent with young children, I like to discuss the things we have to do before a celebration. What if we did not do anything to get ready for a birthday party? Would there be food, decorations, or presents? They always agree that preparing to celebrate is important.

What should our preparation look like? If it is only focused on external ways of getting ready—shopping, baking, decorating, cleaning our homes—we can lose ourselves in trying to make Christmas magical and Pinterest-perfect. Indeed, from Thanksgiving onward, images of a perfect Christmas bombard us.

So how can we prepare? Stepping away from the carefully curated images on social media and television can help us to stop comparing ourselves to others. December is a busy time for families. Simple Advent practices focus our eyes on Jesus without becoming one more item to check off a list.



The Advent wreath reminds families that we await the Light of the world during this season.

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The Advent wreath is a great way for a family to pray daily. The many resources for praying with the Advent wreath center on the simple ritual of lighting candles as we await the light of the world. For my family, it is best to do this before dinner, but a different time might work well in your schedule. Our family sings the same simple song each day, which creates a rhythm for our Advent. Some families enjoy making their own candles for their wreaths from colored beeswax.

The Jesse Tree is another wonderful way to pray through Advent. This tree has ornaments that illustrate the history of salvation up to the birth of Jesus. Ready-made ornaments are available online or families can make their own. These ornaments can be done very simply for young children or more elaborately for older ones. This activity is perfect for busy families because it only takes a few minutes each day but tells the

story of the Chosen People and their time of waiting. This helps us to grow in patience as we wait to celebrate Christmas and helps us to focus our eyes on the one who is coming.

Mary waited for Jesus in a particular way, and families might want to incorporate Mary into their Advent prayer. A first step to doing this might be to put a picture or small statue of Mary in a place of prominence. The family could pray a Hail Mary together or read the Annunciation and Visitation in the Gospel of Luke to reflect on the scriptural origins of this prayer and on Mary's special role in salvation history.

However you choose to prepare your heart for the Lord's coming, may your season be filled with peace, love, and joy. Come, Lord Jesus!