

SIMPLE ADVENT TRADITIONS for FAMILIES



1. Set up an Advent wreath in a prominent location in your home. Try to go traditional by using real evergreen foliage, holly leaves and berries and real candles. You can go online to find out details on making a wreath to suit your family. Remember that visible traditions like the wreath are aids to prayer and spiritual preparation. Pray with your family and friends as you light the candles together each week.
2. Set up a manger scene in your home, or even outside so neighbours can see it. Again, there are many ideas online. You can be crafty and make your scene using paper, cardboard, coloured pencils, paint, etc. You can also buy a crèche as there are many very nice ones available. Use your manger scene as a focus for daily prayer.
3. Have an Advent calendar on display in your home. Get it early so that you are ready when Advent begins. Again, you can make it yourself or buy one from a commercial outlet. Resist the temptation to get one that is exclusively secular and only about candy! You can even download and print the Advent calendar that is on our web site.
4. Make a Jesse Tree. This is an excellent project with which to use your creative crafty ideas. The tree itself can be real or made. It is a great way to learn about the Biblical events and figures that lead to Christmas. It can also be fun!! You can put all of the symbols on the tree at once, or add one on each day of Advent. Use the corresponding Biblical references as a basis for prayer.
5. Read together stories about St Nicholas and St Boniface, to find out the history behind the Christmas tree and the giving of gifts. Include information about St Francis of Assisi and the Christmas crèche. Are there any other saints with Christmas connections?
6. As Christmas cards arrive during December, display them in a noticeable area. Once a day, pull out one card and pray for that person or family together. Look at the image on the card and talk about it. There are some very nice cards.
7. Speaking of Christmas cards, send religious cards to friends and family members. You may be surprised at how many nice ones are available if you look hard. Develop a card list together and help each other prepare them for sending. This is relevant even if cards/greetings are sent electronically.
8. Collect items of food from your household throughout Advent and donate them to a local food bank or the St Vincent de Paul. Organise a donation to the HCA.
9. Fill your house with beautiful religious Advent Christmas carols and music. There is a very rich tradition of Christmas music in our culture. Do some research into finding the very best collection. Have this music played during family time or at any time in your home. Use it to counter the secular Christmas music that you inevitably hear everywhere else. You can even try singing!
10. Prepare your house for Christmas. Decorate tastefully including religious items as well as more commercial ones. Have everyone contribute to "special cleaning" that makes the house feel like Christmas.

All of these activities and traditions can be adapted to use in the classroom or in whatever community space is available.

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAVE FUN!!