

**1 Be Reconciled.**  
Go to confession as a family. Many parishes have opportunities for reconciliation just before the Saturday vigil Mass. Receiving absolution breaks the bonds that sin has created. What a great way to enter into the Advent season and prepare our hearts for Christ.



**2 Commit to a Budget.**  
Once you have decided on the amount of money you will spend this Christmas, keep to it. Make a list before you shop.



**4 Fasting and Abstinence.**  
A very important guest will be arriving in 21 days! Take the opportunity to "clean house" both literally and figuratively! Choose a food or an activity to give up this Advent season to help make room for Christ. Prepare your home for His arrival through decluttering and organizing. Resist the temptation to be drawn into the secular celebrations and focus your heart on the eternal celebrations!

**5 Attend a Christmas Concert.** Allow the beauty of music to fill your hearts and minds, drawing you closer to Christ as you anticipate His coming! The Diocesan Youth Choir Christmas Concert will be on Friday, December 21 at 7:30 pm – for more information visit [www.bridgeportdiocese.org](http://www.bridgeportdiocese.org).



25 WAYS TO USE ADVENT TO PREPARE FOR

Christmas

**6 Celebrate the Feasts of Advent.**  
Today is the feast of St. Nicholas, a third-century bishop, who was known as a miracle worker and secret giver of gifts. Celebrate by sneaking a treat and a note of appreciation and love into your children's bookbag or lunch.

**7 Donate to Others in Need.**  
Many organizations have already identified families in need and even have wish lists for the families. Adopt a family and work together to shop for the items.

**8 Today is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.**  
This is a Holy Day of Obligation — attend Mass to celebrate Mary conceived without original sin. In Spain, they burn candles to celebrate — enjoy a candlelit dinner in honor of Mary.

**9 Choose Life.**  
Help with a ministry that supports life by donating items for mothers and children to Malta House, Sisters of Life, or others. Pray that all may choose life.

**10 Write Letters.**  
Think of people in your life who serve your family, and write letters of thanks with specific words of encouragement.



**11 Set up the Crèche.**  
Tell the story of the birth of Jesus as you work together to set up the manger scene. Make a homemade crèche together — a wonderful way to meditate on the coming of Christ. For extra fun, keep baby Jesus out of His crib and let the youngest member of the family place Him in the manger on Christmas morning before gifts are opened.



**12 Today is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.**  
Invite friends and family to your home for dinner and have a Mexican Feast!

**13 Today is the Feast of St. Lucy.**  
Her feast day is associated with light. It is a great day to light candles and ask St. Lucy to pray for your special intentions.



**15 Get Moving.**  
It is easy to sit around the house, especially when darkness settles in so early. Exercise releases endorphins that lift your spirits. Take a walk. Fill your lungs with fresh air.



**16 Watch a Movie.**  
*The Nativity Story*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *A Charlie Brown Christmas* are all great movies about this holy time of year. Be sure to make popcorn!

**14 Today is the Feast of St. John of the Cross.**  
Celebrate this great Carmelite saint by simplifying and detaching from items in your home. Unplug by putting your phones and tablets face down until the morning. Spend time with each other!



**20 Make Space for Christ.**  
Spend time thinning out possessions and ask children to donate gently used toys.



**19 Step Back in Time.**  
Tell your children the story of your favorite Christmas memory as a child.



**22 Find Goodness.**  
Each day, make a mental note or two about the good things you discover around you.

**23 Adjust Your Attitude.** We are often our own worst enemy and our greatest critic. What if you gave yourself a break this year and concentrated on the real reason for the season?

**17 Bake Cookies for Your Neighbors.**  
Turn up some Christmas music and decorate the cookies while you sing.

**21 Looking Back.**  
Consider your "spiritual genealogy" thinking about all those who have accompanied you in faith, and be thankful for those who accompanied and mentored you so that "His faithfulness continues through all generations."

**24 Be Still.**  
Make time after dinner to sit as a family in the quiet of the night with candles and ponder the miracle of Emmanuel — God with us! Gather on the couch and read the nativity story (Matthew 1:18-23).



**18 Spend Time Together.**  
After dinner together, sit as a family near your crèche and read aloud the beginning of the Gospel of Luke. You could even have young children act out the Gospel using the figurines!



**25 Hallelujah!**  
Celebrate the birth of Christ with great joy and expectation! He has come, is coming each day to us, and one day will come again! Come, let us adore Him.