

25 Ways to Use Advent to Prepare for

CHRISTMAS



1. Be Reconciled

With family, with friends, and with God. Go to confession as a family. Receiving absolution breaks the bonds that sin has created. What a great way to enter into this season of hope.



2. Commit to a Budget for Gifts

There is never a need to go overboard. One you have decided on the amount of money that you will spend this Christmas, keep to it. Never shop without a list.



3. Pray Every Day

Sign up online for a daily devotion from Bishop Caggiano by texting "pray" to 55778 and joining the Face of Prayer.



4. Promise to Fast Once a Week

Choose one day a week and only eat a few small meals. Give up the coffee or other non-essential drinks you might buy on a regular basis and donate that money to someone in need.



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 has the concert you're looking for!



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. Adopt a Family

Many organizations have already identified families in need and even have wish lists for the families. Choose one and work together to shop for the items.



8. Today is 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 Our Lady.



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!



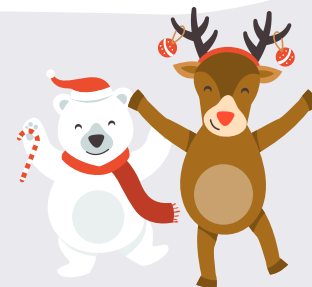
10. Write Letters to those Serving Overseas

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. 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! Prayer for our Hispanic brothers and sisters.



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.



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. Look around for items you hardly ever use and donate them to an organization that provides for the less fortunate.



15. Get Moving

It is easy to sit around the house, especially when darkness settles in so early. Exercise releases endorphins and endorphins make you happy. Take a walk as a family. Fill your lungs with fresh air.



16. Watch a Movie Together

The Nativity Story, It's a Wonderful Life, and A Charlie Brown Christmas, are all great movies about this holy time of year.



17. Bake Cookies for your Neighbors

Turn up some Christmas music and decorate the cookies while you sing. If you cannot bake, buy some tins and cookies at the store and sing while you repack them.



18. Spend Time Together

After dinner, 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.



19. Tell the Christmas Story

Tell your children the story of your favorite Christmas memory as a child. If you have grandparents, FaceTime them and ask them to share a memory or two.



20. Decorate the House

Put up the wreaths, decorate the tree, hang the garland - but leave something special for Christmas morning to make this year's celebration extra special (i.e., the star on the tree).



21. Looking Back

Consider your "spiritual genealogy" thinking about all those who have accompanied you in faith. Give thanks for those who accompanied and mentored you. Pray for them by name and invite your children to do the same.



22. Find Goodness

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



23. Carry Extra Change

Especially as you shop. Then you will not have to avoid the bell ringers at the entrance to stores. Instead, you will be able to give cheerfully because you are prepared.

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).



25. Hallelujah! Turn on the music. Prepare a feast. For the Lord has entered into our midst as one of us. Celebrate the birth of Christ with great joy! Come, let us adore Him.

