

# ADVENT

## Ideas for Teachers and Catechists

December 1 is the beginning of the season of Advent and the beginning of the new liturgical year. Now is a great time to review the liturgical year section in the back of your student, catechist, and teacher editions.

### LITURGICAL YEAR CALENDAR

Plan ahead to post a new liturgical year calendar, and celebrate its posting with a **Prayer for the New Church Year**. Mark upcoming solemnities and feasts with special stickers, pushpins, or symbols. Take time to review with your class or family the seasons of the liturgical year and their colors, symbols, feasts, and focuses. The material in the back of your book will help you lead this discussion.

### ENCOURAGE FAMILIES

To encourage families to celebrate Advent in the home, prepare for each family a copy of Rita Burns Senseman's article, **Celebrating Advent at Home: Purple Is for Advent**. This article offers an explanation of the season of Advent and practical ways for families to celebrate Advent in the home.

### BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Place the Advent wreath on your classroom prayer table, and celebrate with the children and youth the **Blessing of the Advent Wreath**. You may wish to copy and send this home as an Advent prayer resource for families.

### THE JESSE TREE

Tell the stories of the women and men who, like John the Baptist, helped prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Create a classroom Jesse Tree, read the Scripture stories, and create ornaments celebrating the ancestry of Jesus. The **Jesse Tree** is another family-friendly resource you may wish to copy and send home with children and youth.

### THE O ANTIPHONS OF ADVENT

Celebrate in the classroom or encourage families to pray the O Antiphons each day from December 17 to December 23. **The O Antiphons of Advent for Grades 1-4** and **The O Antiphons of Advent for Grades 5-8** provide some background on the O Antiphons, a prayer, a verse of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," and patterns for making simple O Antiphon ornaments.

### CELEBRATE THE SAINTS

Celebrate the many saints whose solemnities and feasts are celebrated this Advent season. Many of their stories can be found in your textbook or at **SaintsResource.com**.



### DECEMBER 3: SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST

Saint Francis Xavier is known as "the Apostle to the Indies" because he sailed to Goa, India, where he preached about Jesus. He lived and worked among the poor first in India, then Japan, and

many came to believe in God and be baptized through him. Saint Francis Xavier was canonized in 1622 and is remembered as the patron saint of Catholic missionaries.

*Today pray for the strength, courage, and conviction to share your faith with those who do not know Jesus. Pray for missionaries around the world, that they may continue to teach about Jesus and to serve those in need.*



## DECEMBER 4: **SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE, PRIEST AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH**

Saint John Damascene wrote much on the veneration of sacred images, including icons. He also wrote beautiful hymns, including "Let All

Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" and "Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain."

*Today take time to look through your religion textbook for sacred images and photographs of icons. Also take time to pray for all artists and musicians who express faith in images and in song.*



## DECEMBER 6: **SAINT NICHOLAS, BISHOP**

Saint Nicholas is one of the best known and best loved of the saints. On his feast day, tangerines are often given as a symbol of the gold he gave in order to save three daughters whose father was going to sell them into slavery. Candy canes

are also offered as a reminder of Bishop Nicholas' crozier, or bishop's staff. Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of children.

*Today pray for all children who are victims of abuse and violence. In honor of Saint Nicholas' generosity, make a special effort to give care, kindness, and time to those around you.*



## DECEMBER 7: **SAINT AMBROSE, BISHOP AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH**

Saint Ambrose was chosen by the people to become the bishop of Milan even though he was a *catechumen*, an unbaptized person. He was a friend of Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine. He baptized Saint Augustine.

*Today pray for all catechumens who are preparing to be initiated into the Catholic faith through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil.*



## DECEMBER 9: **THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

On this day the Church celebrates the dogma that

Mary was kept free from Original Sin from the first moment of her conception. Spain celebrates this solemnity with a tradition called Los Seises (the Dance of the Six). As hymns of the solemnity are sung, six boys dance before the Blessed Sacrament. In Paraguay, Our Lady of the Miracles is celebrated. Invite the children and youth to research these two traditions celebrated on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

*Today pray all or part of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life. The litany is available at [usccb.org](https://www.usccb.org) (Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Life). Note: The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception typically is commemorated on December 8. Because December 8, 2024 is the Second Sunday of Advent, the observance is transferred to Monday, December 9.*

# Celebrating ADVENT



## DECEMBER 10: **OUR LADY OF LORETO**

According to tradition, the house where the Blessed Virgin Mary lived with her husband Joseph and Jesus, her son, was carried by four angels from the Holy Land to Loreto, Italy, where it has

remained since the 13th century. The house has no foundation, it simply sits on a plot of land. Both the shape and structure of the house match those of the Holy Family's home in Nazareth. Our Lady of Loreto is honored in remembering this extraordinary event.

*Today in prayer, give thanks that in this humble home Mary said yes to God and Jesus was incarnate for the Salvation and forgiveness of all. Our Lady of Loreto, pray for us.*



## DECEMBER 11: **SAINT DAMASUS I, POPE**

As pope, Saint Damasus made the decision to make Latin the official language of the western Church.

He gave to Saint Jerome the task of translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek to Latin. This translation was called the Vulgate.

*Today pray all or part of one of the traditional prayers of the Catholic faith (such as the Sign of the Cross, the Glory Be, the Hail Mary, or the Our Father) in Latin. Pray for Pope Francis, that the Holy Spirit will guide him and all Church leaders to make good decisions for the Church throughout the world.*



## DECEMBER 12: **OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, PATRONESS OF THE AMERICAS**

This feast is celebrated as a solemnity in Mexico and in many Hispanic countries. Another name for Our Lady of Guadalupe is *La Morenita* (the little dark one), for Mary appeared to Juan

Diego as an Aztec princess, with dark hair and olive skin. In doing so, she restored dignity to the Aztec people after they had suffered many years of cruelty and poverty.

*Today make copies of the **Prayer for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe** for the children and youth and pray it together.*



## DECEMBER 13: **SAINT LUCY, VIRGIN AND MARTYR**

Saint Lucy's only desire was to serve God and to care for the poor. Her name means *light*. In Sweden, it is customary for the oldest

daughter in the family to don a white robe and to place a wreath of lighted candles on her head. The children in the family join her in serving breakfast to their parents.

*Today pray for families, especially parents, the first teachers of faith to their children. Sing a hymn or refrain celebrating the coming of Jesus, the Light of the world.*





## DECEMBER 14: **SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH**

Saint John of the Cross was a mystic who deeply experienced the spiritual presence of God in his life.

He writes of the “dark night of the soul,” an expression still used today to describe people’s doubts and challenges in their faith.

*Today pray for all those who are struggling with their faith. Pray that they will see and recognize God at work, even in the darkest times of their lives.*



## DECEMBER 21: **SAINT PETER CANISIUS, PRIEST AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH**

Saint Peter Canisius was a Jesuit who spent his life in prayer, study, reflection, writing, and service to the

poor. His concern for teaching the faith to the Germans led him to write three catechisms for adults and a simple catechism for children. He is often called the second apostle of Germany.

*Today take time to pray and reflect on the Apostles’ Creed, which states the main beliefs of the Catholic faith. Pray for the Catholic Church in Germany. And pray to be an apostle who shares the Good News of Jesus Christ with others.*



## DECEMBER 23: **SAINT JOHN OF KANTY, PRIEST**

Saint John of Kanty was a professor of Sacred Scripture at the University of Kraków, Poland. He was known for his love and care of the poor. He lived simply, choosing

to share what he had with those in need. He is the patron saint of Poland and Lithuania.

*Today pray for our sisters and brothers in Poland and Lithuania, and pray for all who teach and preach the Word of God.*

Plan now to celebrate the start of the new liturgical year and the beginning of the season of Advent with prayer, story, symbol, and song!

**Image Credits:** p1: © iStock Editorial / Getty Images Plus p2: © George E. Koronaios/Wikimedia; © Chris Vallo/www.chrisvallo.com /RCL Benziger, © Jorisvo/Getty, © Chris Vallo/www.chrisvallo.com/RCL Benziger, p3: Grotta di Villazzano/Wikimedia; © Gfreihalter/Wikimedia, © Chris Vallo/www.chrisvallo.com/RCL Benziger, © Roman Dunets/RCL Benziger; p4: © Brigida\_Soriano/Getty; © Rijksmuseum/Wikimedia, ©Taddeo Kuntze/Wikimedia