



CELEBRATING

Advent

Now is a great time to review the liturgical year section in the back of your *Be My Disciples* or *Blest Are We* student, catechist, and teacher editions.

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, push pins, 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Don't forget to 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**.

November 30: Saint Andrew, Apostle

Andrew was an Apostle who brought many people to Jesus, including his brother Peter. It was also Andrew who brought the boy with the five loaves and two fish to Jesus.

Today pray for all who tell others about Jesus by their words and by their actions.

December 3: Saint Francis Xavier, Priest

Saint Francis Xavier, one of the first Jesuits, longed to preach the Good News to the Chinese, but died before ever reaching China. He is the patron saint of foreign missions.

Today pray for our sisters and brothers in China, and for all missionaries who work to bring the Good News to China and to every corner of the world.

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' crosier, 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, and 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 8: 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. The litany is available at usccb.org (Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary).

December 9: Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin

Saint Juan Diego was a Mexican farmer and laborer. The Virgin Mary appeared to him, asking him to tell the bishop to build a chapel on Tepeyac Hill. Juan Diego delivered Mary's message to the bishop, but the bishop did not believe him. Juan Diego returned, his cloak filled with roses and with the image of the woman whom we honor as Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Today pray for our sisters and brothers in Mexico. Pray that we will always hear God's voice in the poor and lowly. Invite younger children to make tissue paper roses to place at the feet of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

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 copy the **Our Lady of Guadalupe** prayer 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 custom 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.

Additional seasonal prayer resources and suggestions are available to you at **BeMyDisciples.com**, through your login on **Flourish**.

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!