

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

The Character of the Season

77 The season of Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year. The First Sunday of Advent usually occurs near the beginning of December; the season ends before evening prayer on December 24. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means *coming*. The Advent season celebrates the threefold coming of the Lord: we remember the events that surrounded the Lord’s coming long ago; we celebrate his coming among us today; and we look forward to his final advent in glory.

The *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* (no. 39) describe Advent as a period “for devout and joyful expectation.” Thus, although Advent, like Lent, is a season of preparation, it is not to be viewed as a penitential season.

The Advent season is divided into two parts. The Church’s expectation of Christ’s final coming in glory is emphasized during the first part of Advent – from the first Sunday to December 16. The Church’s preparation for Christmas, when Christ’s first coming is remembered, is the focus of the second part of Advent – from December 17 until Christmas Eve. It is particularly important to note that Advent is not simply a preparation to commemorate the historical event of Christ’s birth. Rather, the entire season celebrates the Church’s desire and longing for the coming of the Lord. On the third Sunday, called *Gaudete* or *Rejoice* Sunday because of the entrance antiphon,⁶⁸ halfway through the otherwise muted season of Advent, all are particularly invited to express the joyful aspect of anticipating the Lord’s coming, and the colour rose, representing joy, may be used.⁶⁹

Advent is a season of joyful expectation and is divided into two parts:

- *From the First Sunday of Advent until December 16 the Church looks forward to Christ’s final coming in glory.*
- *From December 17 until Christmas Eve, the Church remembers and prepares to celebrate Christ’s first coming at Christmas.*

⁶⁸ *Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico, gaudete. Dominus enim prope est*, that is: “Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near (cf. *Phil* 4.4, 5).

⁶⁹ See: *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 346 f.



As the beginning of the liturgical year, the Advent season has the potential to stir up fresh energy within the Christian community. It is a season filled with a spirit of hope and expectation, of excitement and increasing joy. The second coming of Christ at the end of time provides us with the impetus to reflect on the mighty deeds of God in salvation history, the ongoing presence of Christ in the Church today, the human longing for the fullness yet to come, and the Church's mission to hasten the Lord's coming through deeds of holiness and justice. It is also a season that highlights the urgency of the Lord's call to repentance and our need to embrace the good news by the way we live.

The Lectionary

78 In all three years of the lectionary cycle the focus of each Sunday in Advent is clearly identifiable:

- on the first Sunday: the return of the Lord
- on the second Sunday: John the Baptist's call to conversion
- on the third Sunday: the relationship of John to Jesus
- on the fourth Sunday: Mary and the events immediately preceding Christ's birth.

Music during Advent

79 Moderation in the use of music in Advent is recommended.

- *Instruments:* "During Advent the organ and other musical instruments should be used with a moderation that reflects the character of this season, but does not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord."⁷⁰
- *Hymns:* The choice of festive songs will most fittingly mark the Advent season. However, music especially associated with Christmas is not sung during liturgical celebrations in Advent. For some possible choices, see the Liturgical and Topical Indices (no. 702) under the following titles: *Advent, Conversion, End Times, God's Reign, Jesus, Justice, Light, Mary, Mother of God, and Witness*. See also pages 159-162 in this book for proposed hymns for each Sunday.
- *Advent wreath:* In some communities it is the custom to light the candles of the Advent wreath at the beginning of the Sunday

⁷⁰ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 313.

⁷¹ See: *Sunday Celebration of the Word and Hours* (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops – Concacan Inc., Ottawa 1995) pages 4-5 (*First Sunday of Advent – Prayer over the Advent Wreath*).

eucharist.⁷¹ This reflects the hope and expectation of the Christian community as it awaits the coming of the Lord who is the Light of the world. While this popular domestic devotion may fittingly be incorporated into the Sunday liturgy it ought to be celebrated in a simple manner without additional music.

- *Gloria*: Since the season of Advent serves as a preparation for Christmas, the *Glory to God*, the angelic hymn recorded in the Christmas Gospel of Luke (cf. *Lk* 2.14), is not sung.
- *Responsorial psalms*: The responsorial psalms for Advent are found at nos. 15-28. Seasonal settings are at nos. 15, 16 and 23.
- *Alleluia*: Since Advent is not a penitential season, *Alleluia* is sung in the gospel acclamation and in other hymns during the season.
- *Penance celebrations*: Advent is an appropriate time for penance celebrations and celebrations of the sacrament of reconciliation. In addition to the music suggestions found at no. 7 in the hymnal, Advent seasonal hymns and psalms may be used.
- *Liturgy of the hours*: Celebrations of morning and evening prayer in common are also appropriate during this period of joyful preparation. See nos. 13 and 14. Evening prayer, especially when it includes the celebration of light (no. 14), is a powerful expression of the Church's expectation of Christ the Light. Many Advent seasonal hymns are appropriate for use at celebrations of morning and evening prayer.

The Glory to God is not sung during Advent in anticipation of the feast of Christmas.

The custom of holding a festival of Advent carols and readings is encouraged as a way of celebrating in the spirit of this season.

YEAR C Hymn Suggestions – Advent

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – Year C

<i>Entrance:</i>	660/13E	Blessed Be the God of Israel
	315	The Advent of Our God
	304	Awake, Awake: Fling off the Night
<i>Presentation:</i>	318	The King Shall Come
	309	Listen, My People
	314	God of All People
	454	Now from the Heavens Descending
<i>Recessional:</i>	310	O Come, Divine Messiah
	545	Sing Out, Earth and Skies!

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – Year C

<i>Entrance:</i>	308	Every Valley
	351	On Jordan's Bank
	306	Come, O Long Expected Jesus
<i>Presentation:</i>	301	Advent Antiphon
	319	Wait for the Lord
	314	God of All People
<i>Recessional:</i>	317	Prepare the Way
	433	The Voice of God

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT – Year C

<i>Entrance:</i>	304	Awake, Awake: Fling off the Night
	303	Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn
	351	On Jordan's Bank
<i>Presentation:</i>	505	Disciple's Song
	312	O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
	318	The King Shall Come
	500	Surely It Is God Who Saves Me
<i>Recessional:</i>	317	Prepare the Way
	557	Let Heaven Rejoice

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT – Year C

<i>Entrance:</i>	660/13E	Blessed Be the God of Israel
	315	The Advent of Our God
	312	O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
<i>Presentation:</i>	465	Mary, Woman of the Promise
	467	Servant of the Word
	14-I	Canticle of Mary*
<i>Recessional:</i>	575	Tell Out, My Soul*
	310	O Come, Divine Messiah!

* These are settings of the Canticle of Mary. Other settings can be found at nos. 24, 674, 675, 676, 677, and 678.