

Notes on the Season of Advent

It is a time of quiet anticipation. If Christ is going to come again into our hearts, there must be repentance. Without repentance, our hearts will be so full of worldly things that there will be “no room in the inn” for Christ to be born again. We have the joy not of celebration, which is the joy of Christmas, but the joy of anticipation.

~ John R. Brokoff



Advent

Four Sundays preceding Christmas

December 1 - December 24, 2019

In the season of Advent, we remember the many years – centuries, really – the people of God waited for the long-prophesied Messiah, who eventually arrived through the birth of Jesus. The name – Advent – derives from a Latin word for “coming” or “arrival.” It marks the beginning of the liturgical year because it is where the story begins. During this season, we assume a posture of waiting. We choose to enter the story as it happened for those who came before us: with anticipation, with groaning, with longing, with hope. It is no new practice for us to wait in the dark. We, too, live in a world of shadows. We, too, trust in a future beyond our knowing. We, too, cling with a stubborn hope to what God has promised. Advent is a time for us to practice the “already but not yet” kind of waiting.

Questions to Ponder:

- ◆ Where do you notice the Spirit stirring in the midst of deep silence and stillness?
- ◆ How are you being invited to wait with patience and faith for new life to emerge?
- ◆ What might God be conceiving within you now, allowing you to be a vessel of the Divine or a host of the incarnation?
- ◆ Practices to Consider:
- ◆ Use an Advent wreath, lighting a new candle each Sunday

- ◆ Display a nativity scene in your home, adding a new piece to the set each week
- ◆ Create an Advent calendar
- ◆ Take walks in the dark to connect with the theme of waiting in darkness for the light
- ◆ Adopt a silent practice, such as centering prayer or praying with a finger labyrinth
- ◆ Decorate your home slowly and incrementally through the season
- ◆ Listen to music with minor chords, slow rhythms, and themes of longing or proclamation

Notes on the Season of Christmas

The mystery of the holy night, which historically happened 2000 years ago, must be lived as a spiritual event in the “today” of the liturgy. The word who found a dwelling in Mary’s womb comes to knock on the heart of every person with singular intensity this Christmas.

~ Pope John Paul II



Christmas

12 DAYS,

BEGINNING CHRISTMAS DAY

DECEMBER 25, 2019–JANUARY 5, 2020

The season of Christmas, or Christmastide, celebrates the birth of Jesus. It is a twelve-day season in which we herald the fulfillment of God’s promise of a Savior. After the long period of waiting through Advent, Christmas is for us a time of joy—traditionally, a time of “feasting”—where we celebrate the incarnate God in Jesus. The tradition of celebrating Christmas over a period of twelve days goes back as far as the Middle Ages. The season culminates on January 5, the day

before Epiphany, which is also known as the Twelfth Night. In this season, we gather around the light—the external light of tree and fire, the internal light of faith, and the communal light of gathering together—as we celebrate the coming of Jesus, the one true Light, into the world.

Questions to Ponder

- ◇ How has Christ been born in you?
- ◇ How is your life a celebration of the life God brings?
- ◇ Where do you see evidence of God's light in your life and in the world around you?

Practices to Consider

- ◇ Keep your home fully decorated through the season
- ◇ Open presents throughout the twelve days of Christmas
- ◇ Take time off work to relax, rest, and enjoy the season
- ◇ Mark each day with an intentional festivity
- ◇ Throw a Christmas party
- ◇ Go Christmas caroling



Notes on the Season of Epiphany

The experience of the magi reminds us that all who make the tedious journey to the truth will finally in counter it and be changed in the process. They can never go back to a "business as usual" way of life. When we meet Christ and see who he really is, we will never be the same – and only then can we hope to begin to share in his mission.

~ Thomas Rosica



EPIPHANY

ENDS THE DAY BEFORE LENT BEGINS

JANUARY 6–FEBRUARY 25, 2020

The Epiphany of the Lord is a feast day that celebrates the revelation of God as a human being in Jesus Christ. It is observed on January 6 and marks the official end of the Christmas season.

In the West, this feast day is most often associated with the visitation of the magi and their bringing of gifts to the Christ child. In the East, it connects to the baptism of Jesus and the first miracle of water being turned into wine. In some cultures, it is known as “women’s Christmas,” where women enjoy a day of rest after the bustle and hospitality of the Christmas season.

Following Epiphany, we enter into the first of two seasons in the church year called Ordinary Time. Lectionary readings during this time focus on the life and ministry of Jesus and invite us into the maturation of our faith.

Questions To Ponder

- * How am I noticing the revelation of God in my life?
- * What gifts do I have to offer Jesus?
- * In what ways am I being invited to grow?
- * Practices To Consider
- * Move the magi in your nativity scene to the manger, marking their arrival in the story
- * In the spirit of the magi, give your final gifts of the season
- * Chalk the doorframe of your house as an invitation of God’s blessing upon all who enter
- * Host an Epiphany party, using it as an opportunity to extend the telling of the Christmas story
- * Take down the Christmas decorations in your home

Happy New Year!!