



Keep Christ in Christmas



Our parish recognizes the need to “KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS” to combat the increasing secularity of our sacred holy season. Rampant commercialism has largely replaced the true meaning of Christmas throughout the world and our children in public schools are not permitted to celebrate anything religious. Christmas has been “sanitized” at malls and public places, where Santa is “in” but Christ is “out.” And we Christians have allowed that to happen—we’ve unwittingly supported that small minority who want to suppress all religious expression.

What can we, as responsible Catholics do? Here are a few simple steps:

1. **Remember that Christ, not Santa, is the reason for the season.** Put Christ at the forefront of your family's seasonal celebration. Santa is a welcomed visitor, but he comes because he celebrates the birth of Christ with us.
2. **Prepare for Christmas by praying the Advent Prayer, daily, with your family.** (See reverse.)
3. **Send Christmas cards that convey a spiritual message.** Avoid “happy winter scenes” and the Santa-festooned cards so widely used.



4. **Use CHRISTMAS postage stamps.** The Post Office has them, but all too often if you request “Christmas” stamps you’ll be given their secular “Holiday stamps”.



5. **Don’t ever say “Happy Holidays!”** True, the Jewish holiday of Chanukah falls in December. (Sometimes the Islamic holy month of Ramadan can. Too—but not this year—it was in July!) However,

we are celebrating our Christmas **holy day**, not a secular **holiday**. It’s not Jews



(or Muslims) who are behind the drive to expunge Christmas from the season. The enemies of Christmas (and God) have succeeded in making Christians feel as if we are bad and intolerant to wish someone a “Merry Christmas”. **This is political correctness run amok.** We have reached an all time low point in our nation's history when human sensibilities are elevated above offending Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is long past the time for Christians to stand firm in our faith. If we don’t offend Jews and Muslims by celebrating Christmas, who is it that we might offend by wishing everyone a “**Merry Christmas?**”

6. **Christmas is not “XMAS.”** Resist the temptation to abbreviate “Christmas” as “XMAS.” That abbreviation takes Christ out and trivializes the true message of the season.
7. **Beginning December 25, celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas in our homes.**
8. **Above all, celebrate this holy season of Advent and the coming of Christmas by joining others in the liturgies available to us.**



Prepare for Christmas by praying the Advent Prayer, with your family, daily. This tradition helps us to remain vigilant in our homes and not lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas.



The Advent Wreath:

The Advent wreath is part of our long-standing Catholic tradition. Pre-Christian Germanic peoples used wreathes with lit candles during the cold and dark December days as a sign of hope in the future warm and extended-sunlight days of Spring. In Scandinavia during Winter, lighted candles were placed around a wheel, and prayers were offered to the god of light to turn “the wheel of the earth” back toward the sun to lengthen the days and restore warmth. By the Middle Ages, the Christians adapted this tradition and used Advent wreathes as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas.

The light now signifies Christ, “the Light that came into the world” to dispel the darkness of sin and to radiate the truth and love of God (cf. John 3:19-21). The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. The purple candles symbolize the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices and good works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over and they are close to Christmas. The Advent wreath is most appropriately lit at dinner time after the blessing of the food.

The Advent Prayer for Families:

On the **First Sunday of Advent**, the father of the family blesses the wreath, praying: *“God, by whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth Your blessing upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from Your abundant graces. Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.”* He then lights one purple candle.

During the **first week of Advent**, the father prays: *“O Lord, stir up Your might, we beg You, and come, that by Your protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins and saved by Your deliverance. Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.”* The youngest child then lights one purple candle.

During the **second week of Advent**, the father prays: *“O Lord, stir up our hearts that we may prepare for Your only begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve You with pure minds. Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.”* The oldest child then lights the purple candle from the first week plus one more purple candle.

During the **third week of Advent**, the father prays: *“O Lord, we beg You, incline Your ear to our prayers and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Your visitation. Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.”* The mother then lights the two previously lit purple candles plus the rose candle.

Finally, the father prays during the **fourth week of Advent**, *“O Lord, stir up Your power, we pray, and come; and with great might help us, that with the help of Your grace, Your merciful forgiveness may hasten what our sins impede. Who lives and reigns forever. Amen.”* The father then lights all four candles.