

BELIVE, TEACH, & CONFESS

Preparing for Advent

“Advent” from Latin *adventus* (“coming”), used to translate the Greek word *parousia*.

- I. Origins of Advent: Initial focus on Sunday as the day of resurrection, with later growth of times to commemorate particular events from Jesus’ life and ministry
 - A. Preparation for Baptism (Easter, Pentecost, and Epiphany)
 1. Three-week time of preparation beginning on December 17 in fourth century France and Spain
 2. Christmas celebration in Rome preceded by a time of preparation for all, not just catechumens
 - B. Preparation for the End
 1. St. Martin’s Lent – sixth century France, began on November 11
 2. Focus on the coming judgment and need for repentance
 3. Emphasis of the end of the historic church year
 - a. Trinity 25
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18
 - ii. Matthew 24:15 – 28
 - b. Trinity 26
 - i. 2 Peter 3:3 – 14
 - ii. Matthew 25:31 – 46
 - c. Trinity 27/Last Sunday of the Church Year
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 5:1 – 11
 - ii. Matthew 25:1 – 13
 - C. Standardization in the West
 1. Pope Gregory the Great (r. 590 – 604)
 2. Four Sundays, representing the 4,000 years of waiting for the Messiah
*Adam lay ybounden Bounden in a bond;
Four thousand winter Thought he not too long...*

II. Emphases of Advent: Coming

Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153):

We know that there are three comings of the Lord. The third lies between the other two. It is invisible, while the other two are visible. In the first coming He was seen on earth, dwelling among men; He Himself testifies that they saw Him and hated Him. In the final coming all flesh will see the salvation of our God, and they will look on Him whom they pierced. The intermediate coming is a hidden one; in it only the elect see the Lord within their own selves, and they are saved. In His first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness; in this middle coming He comes in spirit and in power; in the final coming He will be seen in glory and majesty . . . Because this [middle] coming lies between the other two, it is like a road on which we travel from the first coming to the last. In the first, Christ was our redemption; in the last, He will appear as our life; in this middle coming, He is our rest and consolation.

Cyril of Jerusalem (315 – 386):

There is a birth from God before the ages,
and a birth from a virgin at the fullness of time.
There is a hidden coming, like that of rain on fleece,
and a coming before all eyes, still in the future.

A. The Lord's First Coming in History

1. The waiting of the Old Testament believers
2. Messianic prophecies featured
3. Not the major emphasis until December 17

The O Antiphons, sung before and after the *Magnificat* at Vespers, a different antiphon appointed for each day December 17 – 23, each addressing our Lord by a title from the Old Testament and ending with the plea, “Come”

a. December 17: O Sapientia

O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High,
pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things:
Come and teach us the way of understanding.

b. December 18: O Adonai

O Adonai and ruler of the house of Israel,
who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law
on Sinai:
Come with an outstretched arm and redeem us.

- c. December 19: O Radix Jesse
 O Root of Jesse, standing as a signal to the peoples,
 before whom all kings are mute, to whom the nations will do
 homage:
 Come quickly to deliver us.
- d. December 20: O Clavis David
 O Key of David, and scepter of the house of Israel,
 You open and no one can close, You close and no one can open:
 Come and rescue the prisoners who dwell in darkness and the
 shadow of death.
- e. December 21: O Oriens
 O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting
 and sun of righteousness:
 Come and give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow
 of death.
- f. December 22: O Rex Gentium
 O King of the nations, the ruler they long for,
 the cornerstone uniting all people:
 Come and save us all, whom You formed out of clay.
- g. December 23: O Emmanuel
 O Emmanuel, our king and lawgiver,
 the desire of the nations and their savior:
 Come and save us, O Lord our God.

B. The Lord's Second Coming in Glory

“[Advent] is not just climbing back into the Old Testament and attempting a make-believe waiting, pretending that the Christ has not yet come. The waiting of Advent is a real waiting, an authentic expectancy of an event that has not yet taken place, an event that still lies out there ahead of us.” – Philip Pfatteicher, *Journey into the Heart of God: Living the Liturgical Year*, 28.

- 1. Appears throughout the hymnody of Advent over the course of history:
 - a. Latin hymnody: 345, 351, 357
 - b. German hymnody: 333, 334, 352, 355
 - c. Modern hymnody: 331, 336, 337, 348

2. *Dies Irae* – written by Thomas de Celano (13th century) for the First Sunday in Advent, later associated with Requiems

1. Day of wrath, O day of mourning!
See fulfilled the prophet's warning:
Heav'n and earth in ashes burning.
Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth,
Through earth's sepulchers it ringeth,
All before the throne it bringeth.
O what fear man's bosom rendeth
When from heav'n the Judge descendeth
On whose sentence all dependeth.
2. Death is struck and nature quaking;
All creation is awaking,
To its Judge an answer making.
Lo, the book, exactly worded,
Wherein all hath been recorded;
Thence shall judgment be awarded.
When the Judge His seat attaineth,
And each hidden deed arraigneth,
Nothing unavenged remaineth.
3. What shall I, frail man, be pleading,
Who for me be interceding
When the just are mercy needing?
King of Majesty tremendous,
Who dost free salvation send us,
Fount of pity, then befriend us!
Righteous Judge, for sin's pollution
Grant Thy gift of absolution
Ere the Day of Retribution.
4. Faint and weary Thou hast sought me,
On the cross of suffering bought me;
Shall such grace be vainly brought me?
Think, good Jesus, my salvation
Caused Thy wondrous incarnation;
Leave me not to sin's damnation!
Guilty now I pour my moaning,
All my shame with anguish owning:
Hear, O Christ, Thy servant's groaning!
5. Bows my heart in meek submission,
Strewn with ashes of contrition;
Help me in my last condition!
Worthless are my prayers and sighing;
Yet, Good Lord, in grace complying,
Rescue me from fires undying.
Thou the sinful woman savedst;
Thou the dying thief forgavest;
Thus to me true hope vouchsafest!
6. With Thy favored sheep then place me,
Nor among the goats abase me,
But to Thy right hand upraise me.
While the wicked are confounded,
Doomed to flames of woe unbounded,
Call me, with Thy saints surrounded.
To the rest Thou didst prepare me
On Thy cross; O Christ, upbear me!
Spare, O God, in mercy spare me.

C. The Lord's Coming Now in Grace

III. Meaning and Practice of Advent Today

A. Preparation in the Church – the church prepares by repentance

1. Violet paraments, recent shift to blue as color of hope
2. *Gloria in Excelsis* is dropped from the liturgy until Christmas
3. Music reduced, weddings generally not held, no flowers on the altar

4. The Sundays in Advent – historic names from the opening words of the Latin introit
 - a. Advent 1 – *Ad Te Levavi*

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance;
 - b. Advent 2 – *Populus Zion*

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds;
 - c. Advent 3 – *Gaudete*

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation;
 - d. Advent 4 – *Rorate Caeli*

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy;
 - e. Vigil of Christmas (when Dec 24 is a Sunday)

O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive Him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold Him when He comes to be our Judge;

5. Proper Preface for Advent

It is truly meet, right, and salutary ...whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the promised Messiah, the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and calling sinners to repentance that they might escape from the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory. Therefore with angels...

B. Preparation in the Home

Prayer

Fasting

Almsgiving

IV. Services of Holy Christmas

A. The First Day of Christmas: December 25 – three masses, three unique foci

1. Midnight (Lk 2:1 – 14)

2. Dawn (Lk 2:15 – 20)

3. Day (Jn 1:1 – 14)

B. The Second through Fourth Days of Christmas – the companions of Christ

1. St. Stephen – December 26

2. St. John the Evangelist and Apostle – December 27

3. The Holy Innocents – December 28

C. The First Sunday after Christmas (Lk 2:[22 – 32] 33 – 40)

D. The Octave of Christmas – January 1 (Lk 2:21)

E. The Second Sunday after Christmas/Sunday after New Years' (Matt 2:13 – 23)

F. 12 Days of Christmas (from 9th century England), ends on Epiphany Eve