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Published by Liguori Publications
Liguori, Missouri 63057

To order, call 800-325-9521
www.liguori.org

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Printed in the United States of America
14 13 12 11 / 5 4 3 2
First Edition

Design: Wendy Barnes

Dedication

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Acknowledgments

No set of acknowledgments would be complete if I didn't start with a huge thank you to Mama Mary, whose intercession and work in my life continues, though I remain slow to see it and slower still to act on the small opportunities she presents to me.

My husband and best friend, Bob, deserves a warm meal, a long vacation, and a large hug, because his untiring support and timely levity really make my creative side possible. And when the creativity is low, he never fails to remind me—gently—that hard work is the secret to success of any sort.

Thanks to my mother-in-law, Ann Van Hoose, for rocking the baby, feeding the kids, and in general, offering me free rein of her house (and her great Internet connection) whenever I needed it.

Thanks to Ali and Susie, who never fail to make me smile and remind me of my priorities. Thanks, too, for taking the girls for me so I could have uninterrupted writing time.

Thanks to Allison Arend, Gloria Butler, Brittany Shoots-Reinhard, Walt Staples, and Kate Wicker for their comments and suggestions on the early draft.

Thank you to all the fine folks at Liguori, including Kevin Klaric and Rebecca Molen, for making this experience both educational and enjoyable.



Introduction

A

dvent is a season almost forgotten by the secular world. You'll find Advent calendars, but they are simply an adornment for the "Christmas season," which begins sometime after Halloween and ends on Christmas day.

This booklet is designed to help you and your family capture some of what's intended by the liturgical season of Advent. Each day has a Scripture quote, a brief reflection, and an action to complete.

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What I hope you gain from this booklet is an appreciation of Advent. Do as much—or as little—as you can each day. It is not as important to do every reflection and activity as it is for you and your family to enjoy the anticipation of Christ's birth.

Everyone will enjoy this time more if it doesn't become just one more thing added to an already busy time of year. Try to find a quiet moment each day and spend it together. Don't try to read or plan ahead; just embrace each day as the page turns.

You'll notice the book continues a bit *after* Christmas day, and that's because the Christmas season properly *begins* on December 25 and lasts, in the Church's calendar, until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. After all your presents have been opened and the decorations put away, we still have a Baby who changed the world and who is, at the heart of it, the biggest reason for our celebration. Everything else is secondary to the arrival of our Messiah.

May your Advent be blessed this year, and may your Christmas be better for the preparation you do during Advent.

—Sarah Reinhard



First Sunday of Advent

Get Ready!

*Watch,
therefore; you
do not know
when the lord
of the house
is coming,
whether in the
evening, or at
midnight, or at
cockcrow, or in
the morning.*

MARK 13:35

Think

What would you do if a king were coming to visit you? You'd want to know ahead of time that he was coming, wouldn't you? You would probably want to straighten up a few things and find ways to make your house special for the king's arrival.

Each year, a King does come to us. He comes as a baby, in a small trough in a rough cave. Though his place in time was thousands of years ago, we are invited to meet him again every year as though for the first time.

Christmas seems so far away on this first Sunday of Advent. The Christmas decorations have not been put up in the church, though an Advent wreath is probably in place.

The stores, however, are decorated and blaring Christmas music. It's enough to make us think it's the Christmas season, but it's not. Not until December 25.

During this time of waiting, we have a lot to do. We might have presents to buy and decorations to hang, but there are even more important things. We have to make sure we are ready.

Sometimes all the other things about Christmas distract



First Sunday of Advent

Light a Candle

The HOPE candle



us from the real event, the birth of the Christ Child. Sometimes we forget about the real story that started it all.

This week, we'll focus on getting ready for Christmas. One way we can do that is to ask Jesus to help us every day. Every year, we have a chance to meet him again in the manger, and every year, we have a season to help us get ready. Let's spend our Advent turning to Jesus with every little part of our day.

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Pray

Jesus, help me get ready for your birth. Help me to see past the shiny decorations in all the stores and to remember that I'm waiting for you. Amen.

Act

One way to get ready for Jesus is to make an Advent resolution. What can you give Jesus? Is there a person you can be nice to all during Advent? Could you help someone in a special way during Advent? Think of something you can do to get ready for Jesus' birth.

As we light the first purple candle, we can think of the hope we have in the coming of the Lord. Remember the angel's visit to Mary, the visit at the Annunciation that got things started. We walk with Mary this week as we get ready with her for the coming of our Savior.

Monday

First Week of Advent

Think

When you get ready to go somewhere important, you probably make sure that you look nice and that you have the things you need.

Advent is no different. We are getting ready for a day that changes the world again and again: Christmas.

No one expected the Messiah to come as a simple baby, a human just like us, who suffered and who even died.

No one will expect him when he comes again at the end of time. We are reminded throughout this first week of our Advent journey that we always have to be ready. We have to have our lives in order, from the biggest to the smallest of things. We don't want to disappoint our King!

Pray

Jesus, thank you for the gift of Advent, for the chance to get ready for Christmas. Help me to remember you in the midst of all the things going on around me. Give me the strength to turn to you for help. Amen.

Act

As you think about the way you'll get your heart ready, clean and pick up toys in a room in your house.

*Be vigilant
at all times
and pray that
you have the
strength to
escape the
tribulations that
are imminent
and to stand
before the
Son of Man.*

LUKE 21:36

Get Ready

Tuesday

First Week of Advent

Think

As we prepare for our Messiah to come, we should be examining our lives and our hearts. Do we act the way we should? Are we treating people with respect and love? Is there an area in our lives that needs special attention during this season of Advent preparation?

Let's think of our heart as a house that King Jesus will be coming to visit. We want it to be clean and neat, ready for him. We should sweep it free of all the grudges we hold against other people. We should be mindful of how we treat the people around us, especially those closest to us, the ones we see every day. We should also think of the things Jesus has asked us to do in the Ten Commandments, especially honoring our parents.

Advent is a time each year to realize we are awaiting a grand guest. He will be just a baby, one who is totally dependent on us, but we have to be ready for the gift of his visit. He is trusting us to take care of him, and we want to do that to the best of our ability.

Pray

Jesus, help me to see the areas in my life that I need to work on before you come on Christmas day.

Give me the grace to change the one small thing that will be a gift to you. Amen.

Act

Today, think of one way you can get ready for Jesus. Maybe you can help your mom around the house. Maybe you need to make up with someone who has hurt you or whom you have hurt. Whatever it is, remember that Jesus will help you.



***Therefore,
stay awake!
For you do not
know on which
day your Lord
will come.***

MATTHEW 24:42

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Wednesday

First Week of Advent

Think

Sleep is a necessary part of our lives. Sometimes when we don't get enough sleep, it shows in our

actions.

Though sleep is necessary, it's also used, especially in the Gospel readings for the first week of Advent, as a symbol of laziness. This week, we're trying to get ready for Jesus' coming. We don't want to be caught sleeping.

Have you ever overslept and missed something important? How does it feel when you wake up late and have to rush around getting ready to leave?

We don't want Christmas day to come as a surprise, the kind that leaves us frazzled and stressed. We want it to be an experience of joy and love for our Savior. His coming is a gift, after all.

To be ready, though, we have to do our work now. We have to forgive the people who have hurt us and let go of any pain from our past. It isn't easy, but Jesus will help us in this important work.

Pray

Jesus, I want to be ready for you on Christmas day. Help me to be awake for your coming, and help me to forgive the people who have hurt me today. Amen.

Act

Before bedtime, kneel and say a prayer—perhaps an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be—for a person who annoyed you today. Get your heart ready by offering this gift for them.

***May he not
come suddenly
and find you
sleeping.***
MARK 13:36

Get Ready

Thursday

First Week of Advent

Think

With today's Scripture, we have the image of loudness. If you have never heard the roar of ocean waves, think of a loud piece of machinery or an explosion of thunder. Loud noises get our attention.

Christmas day is a sort of loud noise waiting to happen, but it doesn't happen with a bang. It happens in the silence of a stable, in the middle of a small town, with only a few witnesses.

Shouldn't the Son of God have come with a big bang? That's what everyone expected, but it's not what happened. God doesn't often operate with loud noises or flashes of lightning. God gets our attention in small ways, using the silence of our hearts.

Before we can hear the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit, though, we need silence. As we prepare this week, let's try to find some quiet time in our day to spend with God, talking with him and listening for him.

Pray

to come. Amen.

Jesus, so often my life is loud and filled with busy-ness. Help me to be still and quiet, waiting for you

Act

Use a soft voice today. Be extra-patient with the people around you, especially the ones who usually get on your nerves or frustrate you.



There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

LUKE 21:25

Friday

First Week of Advent

Think

How do you feel when something happens that you weren't expecting? Do you like to be surprised? What if it's not a surprise you like?

We're told Jesus will come at an unexpected time. Chances are, we'll have other plans and other things to do.

Is Christmas a time when you envision getting presents? Is it a time for getting up early and eating a special meal? What if it doesn't turn out the way you want?

Preparing ourselves means being open to what God has in mind instead of limiting ourselves to what we want. God knows what's best for us, and he will help us deal with the circumstances we have to face in life.

This isn't just about Christmas day; it's about our lives. Advent is a time to get ready for Jesus' birth, but it's also a time of grace when we can give Baby Jesus the gift of changing our inner selves. We can become nicer during Advent and stay nicer once it's over.

To be ready for Jesus, we have to keep working on ourselves.

Pray

Jesus, though Christmas is still a long way off, I want to be ready. Give me the strength to change myself to be more prepared for your coming. Help me to see that when I give of myself, I receive the greatest blessing in being more like you. Amen.

Act

Help in the kitchen today without being asked. Set the table or clear it after a meal, do the dishes or empty the dishwasher, or find another way to help.



*So too, you
also must be
prepared, for at
an hour you do
not expect, the
Son of Man
will come.*

MATTHEW 24:44

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Get Ready

Saturday

First Week of Advent

Think

This time of year, there are always a lot of parties and great food. You'll find cookies and candies wherever you go, and maybe you'll even have the chance to eat as much as you want.

There's also pressure at this time of year—maybe you don't feel it, but you might sense it in the people around you. There seems to be so much to do that if we're not careful, we might forget what we're preparing for.

Today's Scripture reminds us that we are supposed to be ready for Christmas. More than a day on the calendar, we are to experience it in our hearts.

The birth of Jesus changed the world, and it continues to change it. He's coming to visit us, and we want to be waiting with a smile on our face. The time to celebrate is not yet here. We're still getting ready.

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Pray

Jesus, I want to be ready when you come, but there are so many distractions. Everyone's acting like it's already Christmas! Help me to get ready for you. Amen.

Act

Give up one thing today, whether a favorite food or an activity. Discover how giving up something you like will help you get ready for the great feast of Christmas.



Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth.
LUKE 21:34–35