

# ADVENT

## *Traditions*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### AN ADVENT PRAYER

Lord God,  
during this time of Advent  
may your Word illuminate  
all darkness in my life.  
May one flame serve as a spark  
to ignite in me a fire of desire for you.  
May a second flame light a lamp  
by which I may find my way to you.  
May a third flame warm my heart  
so I may love as you love.  
And may a fourth flame shine so brightly  
that the world may see your Word in me.  
Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Emmanuel.  
Use me to shine forth Your Word  
to a world seeking light in the darkness.  
Amen.



## A Sense of Hospitality

**Y**es, not everyone bakes. But thanks to modern techniques of packaging dough in a casing that can be cut and placed in the oven, you too can have a house filled with the scent of fresh baked cookies. Baking is just one of several traditions that come to mind when hearing the call to make our houses fair and await the guest who is love itself, the Christ Child.

A sense of hospitality is important all year long, but in the weeks leading up to Christmas, it would seem our desire for sharing good food, drink, and the company of others intensifies.



*People, look east. The time is near  
of the crowning of the year.  
Make your house fair as you are able,  
Trim the hearth and set the table.  
People, look east and sing today:  
Love, the guest, is on the way.*



**"People, Look East"**  
by Eleanor Farjeon  
(1881–1965) and was  
first published as  
**"Carol of Advent,"**  
The Oxford Book of  
Carols, 1928.



This Advent, why not open our doors a little wider for someone that has no memories of this type of hospitality?

Unfortunately, for many of us in the modern world, increasing social isolation and the rapid pace of life has led to a decrease in true hospitality. Who has time to bake, attend parties, invite over friends, or, at times, travel?

But our final days of Advent preparation cannot bear great fruit unless we take time to pause and offer each other hospitality. Whether they come from an Italian cookie rich with anise or a Polish kolaczki, the rich smells of the season connect us to times gone by and to family. It was in the midst of those scents that many of us first came to know the story of God's love for us. It is offering those memories to new generations and those currently in our lives that we continue to bear witness to the importance of this time.

This Advent, why not open our doors a little wider for someone that has no memories of this type of hospitality? Perhaps share a glass of wine and some conversation with someone who

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lives life alone. Open your door with rich hospitality to friends and family, but also to those who have no way to open the door for you. When Mary and Joseph sought out a place to rest in anticipation of Jesus' birth, they found many doors closed. Now, Jesus under the guise of another in your life is seeking a place of hospitality. Let him in!





# Advent Q&A

## Why do we give gifts at Christmas?

Great events in and of themselves are not tangible. They occur in life but leave no mark behind, nothing that someone could come across and know that something significant occurred. So we mark the event with monuments, holidays, gold watches, or plaques, making a meaningful event tangible and memorable.

Gifts at Christmas do the same thing. They mark the occasion of the birth of Jesus, communicating a bit of the joy of the day by allowing us to be both giver and receiver. Gift-giving sets aside the day as special and different. The special foods, customs, decorations, and gifts all help focus our attention on the importance and meaning of the day and at the same time allow us to share personally in its joy and happiness.

In giving gifts, though, we can share in the meaning of Christmas in a significant way. We imitate God in sharing with others. We give a bit of ourselves to others in the gifts we give, just as God gives us the gift of his Son. No wonder we often say that the best gifts are those that come from the heart. Given in love, these presents are wrapped in the best covering of all.



## Preparing by Doing Nothing

Taken from the book *Everyday Stewardship* - Tracy Earl Welliver

*But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. —2 Peter 3:8-9*

like sleeping on a long trip when somebody else is driving. You fall asleep at one point on the trip and wake up maybe ninety minutes later and—surprise—ninety minutes gone in what seems like one is awesome!

Time never changes for us, but how we perceive its passing does. Children are easily bored after just a few minutes of waiting for something. Sometimes, things seem to happen too quickly, leaving us feeling unprepared.

Yes, I believe that God gives meaning to our life. But I also think the singer and songwriter James Taylor had it right when he wrote the lyric, "The secret of life is enjoying the passage of time." When we are busy with work, family, church, or the normal events of daily life we can easily feel purpose in our lives. It is when nothing is happening we sometimes wonder if the world is passing us by.

Good stewards are called to give all time back to God. It is easy to see why we would give him the good times and, of course, call on him in the bad times. But we need to give him the ordinary quiet times as well. We need to revel in the gift of just passing some time sitting on a porch, or waiting for a phone call, or reflecting on the day before heading to bed. I will admit I am sometimes at my best when I am doing nothing. Sounds strange, I know. But I am more keenly aware at those times that Jesus is close to me. I am always better when I am by God's side.

So, this Advent, watch and wait. He is coming soon. The secret is enjoying the wait.

## IDEA FOR RESPONSE

Take twenty minutes and sit on your front porch or in a park and just observe all of God's creation around you.



# KIDS' Corner

G R O W I N G   W I T H   T H E   G O S P E L

Lord,  
give me  
wisdom to  
ask you for  
your help.

Complete the picture.



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**Mission for the Week:** I will not give up on difficult jobs. I will pray and try again.