ADVENT

“Advent, this powerful liturgical season that we are beginning, invites us to pause in silence to understand a presence. It is an invitation to understand that the individual events of the day are hints that God is giving us, signs of the attention he has for each one of us.”¹

39. Advent has a twofold character, for it is a time of preparation for the Solemnities of Christmas, in which the First Coming of the Son of God to humanity is remembered, and likewise a time when, by remembrance of this, minds and hearts are led to look forward to Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, Advent is a period of devout and expectant delight.

40. Advent begins with First Vespers (Evening Prayer I) of the Sunday that falls on or closest to 30 November and it ends before First Vespers (Evening Prayer I) of Christmas.

41. The Sundays of this time of year are named the First, Second, Third, and Fourth

42. The weekdays from 17 December up to and including 24 December are ordered in a more direct way to preparing for the Nativity of the Lord.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, November 28, 2009.
TOPICS

The Advent Wreath
“Placing four candles on green fronds has become a symbol of Advent in many Christian home, especially in the Germanic countries and in North America. The Advent wreath, with the progressive lighting of its four candles, Sunday after Sunday, until the Solemnity of Christmas, is a recollection of the various stages of salvation history prior to Christ's coming and a symbol of the prophetic light gradually illuminating the long night prior to the rising of the Sun of justice.”

“If the Advent Wreath is used in church, it should be of sufficient size to be visible to the congregation. It may be suspended from the ceiling or placed on a stand. If it is placed in the sanctuary, it should not interfere with the celebration of the liturgy, not should it obscure the altar, ambo, or presider's chair.”

Color for Advent
“The liturgical color for Advent is purple, just like Lent—as both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days. Also Advent (like Lent) includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas. This penitential dimension is expressed through use of the color purple.”

Decorations during Advent
“During Advent the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord...Floral decoration should always show moderation and be arranged around the altar rather than on the altar table.”

Gaudete Sunday and Advent
“The third Sunday of Advent is called "Gaudete" Sunday (coming from the first word of the Latin Entrance Antiphon for this day, meaning "Rejoice") and the liturgical color may be rose instead of purple. This is the Church's way of further heightening our expectation as we draw ever nearer the Solemnity of Christmas.”

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3 Book of Blessings, no. 1512.
4 Bishops Committee on Divine Worship, URL....
5 GIRM, no. 305.
6 Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship.
Immaculate Conception
“The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which is profoundly influential among the faithful, is an occasion for many displays of popular piety and especially for the novena of the Immaculate Conception. There can be no doubt that the feast of the pure and sinless Conception of the Virgin Mary, which is a fundamental preparation for the Lord's coming into the world, harmonizes perfectly with many of the salient themes of Advent. This feast also makes reference to the long messianic waiting for the Savior's birth and recalls events and prophecies from the Old Testament, which are also used in the Liturgy of Advent.”

Because December 8, 2019 falls on the Second Sunday of Advent, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, patronal feast of the United States, is transferred to Monday, December 9th, without the obligation to attend Mass on that day. Because the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is of a higher rank in the Table of Liturgical Days that the optional memorial of Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin on December 9, Saint Juan Diego is not commemorated this year. The Committee on Divine Worship helpfully notes, however, that “It would not be difficult to mention him, however, in the homily or the petitions on the Immaculate Conception, as he was a faithful servant of Mary in spreading her message from Tepeyac Hill in Mexico City.”

Mary and Advent
The Liturgy frequently celebrates the Blessed Virgin Mary in an exemplary way during the season of Advent. It recalls the women of the Old Testament who prefigured and prophesied her mission; it exalts her faith and the humility with which she promptly and totally submitted to God's plan of salvation; it highlights her presence in the events of grace preceding the birth of the Savior. Popular piety also devotes particular attention to the Blessed Virgin Mary during Advent, as is evident from the many pious exercises practiced at this time, especially the novena of the Immaculate Conception and of Christmas. However, the significance of Advent, "that time which is particularly apt for the cult of the Mother of God,” is such that it cannot be represented merely as a "Marian month”.

Music for Advent
“In Advent, the use of the organ and other musical instruments should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.” (GIRM, no. 313)

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7 PDL, no. 102.
8 PDL, no. 101.
CHRISTMAS

“Christmas is a privileged opportunity to meditate on the meaning and value of our existence. The approach of this Solemnity helps us on the one hand to reflect on the drama of history in which people, injured by sin, are perennially in search of happiness and of a fulfilling sense of life and death; and on the other, it urges us to meditate on the merciful kindness of God who came to man to communicate to him directly the Truth that saves, and to enable him to partake in his friendship and his life. Therefore let us prepare ourselves for Christmas with humility and simplicity, making ourselves ready to receive as a gift the light, joy and peace that shine from this mystery.”

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9 Pope Benedict XVI, December 17, 2008.
TOPICS

Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts on Epiphany?
Before the existence of moveable type, the widespread existence of Calendars was little known. Thus the public proclamation of the date of Easter and the other moveable feasts on the Feast of the Epiphany was a common practice.

The Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship, which helpfully provides the following version of the Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts for the year 2020, notes
that this solemn proclamation can be “a reminder of the centrality of the resurrection of the Lord in the liturgical year and the importance of the great mysteries of faith which are celebrated each year.”

The official text, set to chant, is found in Appendix I of the Roman Missal, and is preceded by the following rubric:

*On the Epiphany of the Lord, after the singing of the Gospel, a Deacon or cantor, in keeping with an ancient practice of Holy Church, announces from the ambo the moveable feasts of the current year according to this formula:*

**Announcement of Easter and the Moveable Feasts**

*for the year 2020*

Know, dear brethren (brothers and sisters), that, as we have rejoiced at the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, so by leave of God's mercy we announce to you also the joy of his Resurrection, who is our Savior.

On the **twenty-sixth** day of **February** will fall Ash Wednesday, and the beginning of the fast of the most sacred Lenten season.
On the **twelfth** day of **April** you will celebrate with joy Easter Day, the Paschal feast of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*In those places where the Ascension is observed on Thursday:*
On the **twenty-first** day of **May** will be the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*In those places where the Ascension is transferred to the Seventh Sunday of Easter:*
On the **twenty-fourth** day of **May** will be the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the **thirty-first** day of **May**, the feast of Pentecost.
On the **fourteenth** day of **June**, the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.
On the **twenty-ninth** day of **November**, the First Sunday of the Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**Christmas Crib**

“As is well known, in addition to the representations of the crib found in churches since antiquity, the custom of building cribs in the home was widely promoted from the thirteenth century, influenced undoubtedly by St. Francis of Assisi’s crib in Greccio. Their preparation, in which children play a significant role, is an occasion for the members of the family to come into contact with the mystery of Christmas, as they gather for a moment of prayer or to read the biblical accounts of the Lord's birth.”

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10 DPL, no. 104.
Christmas Novena
“The Christmas novena began as a means of communicating the riches of the Liturgy to the faithful who were unable easily to grasp it. It has played a very effective role and can continue to play such a role. At the same time, in current conditions where the faithful have easier access to the Liturgy, it would seem desirable that vespers from the 17-23 of December should be more solemn by adopting the use of the "major antiphons", and by inviting the faithful to participate at the celebration. Such a celebration, held either before or after which the popular devotions to which the faithful are particularly attached, would be an ideal "Christmas novena", in full conformity with the Liturgy and mindful of the needs of the faithful. Some elements, such as the homily, the use of incense, and the intercessions, could also be expanded within the celebration of Vespers.”

Christmas Play at Mass
Some parishes have an established tradition of Christmas pageants on Christmas Eve, often encouraging the participation of children. While this commendable, It is helpful, it is also helpful to recall, the Nativity should be proclaimed by the Deacon or Priest, following the rubrics in the usual manner and “care should be taken not to give the impression that the liturgy of the word is a play.” (Directory for Masses with Children, no. 52; cf. GIRM, no. 21, footnote 32)

Color of Christmas
While the liturgical color for Christmas is white, the General Instruction of the Roman Missal also provides that “On more solemn days, festive, that is, more precious, sacred vestments may be used even if not of the color of the day.” (GIRM, no. 346g). Likewise, “The colors gold or silver may be worn on more solemn occasions in the Dioceses of the United States of America.” (GIRM, no. 346h)

Home Blessings
Christmas is a wonderful Season for family prayer, led by the parents or even one of the children. Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers provides blessings for a Nativity Scene, a Christmas Tree or the Home on Epiphany, all of which are available at the links provided. The Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship has also prepared a family Christmas Calendar with suggested prayers and family activities (en Español).

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11 DPL, no. 103.
Proclamation of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ

This Proclamation of the Birth of Christ is the solemn announcement of the Nativity of the Lord from the Roman Martyrology. It was restored to the Liturgy in 1980 by Pope Saint John Paul II and may be chanted or recited on the night before Christmas either during the celebration of Evening Prayer or before the beginning of Christmas Mass during the Night.

The text which follows places the Nativity of the Lord within the context of Salvation History and major events in human history, beginning with the Creation and the Great Flood, Abraham, Exodus and the Reign of David. Reference is then made to the Prophecy of Daniel and dates the birth of the Christ in relation to the Olympiad, the Founding of Rome, and the Beginning of the Reign of Augustus.
THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Twenty-fifth Day of December,

when ages beyond number had run their course
from the creation of the world,

when God in the beginning created heaven and earth,
and formed man in his own likeness;

when century upon century had passed
since the Almighty set his bow in the clouds after the Great Flood,
as a sign of covenant and peace;

in the twenty-first century since Abraham, our father in faith,
came out of Ur of the Chaldees;

in the thirteenth century since the People of Israel were led by Moses
in the Exodus from Egypt;

around the thousandth year since David was anointed King;

in the sixty-fifth week of the prophecy of Daniel;

in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;

in the year seven hundred and fifty-two
since the foundation of the City of Rome;

in the forty-second year of the reign of Caesar Octavian Augustus,
the whole world being at peace,

JESUS CHRIST, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
desiring to consecrate the world by his most loving presence,
was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and when nine months had passed since his conception,
was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judah,
and was made man:

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.