

## *Prayers to be Recited When Visiting a Christmas Crib*

**I**n the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

(Recite 1 Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be)

V. And the Word was made flesh

R. And dwelt among us.

**O** Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ, prostrate before Thy crib, I believe that Thou art the God of infinite majesty, even though I see Thee as a helpless babe. Humbly I adore and thank Thee for having so humbled Thyself for my salvation as to will to be born in a stable. I thank Thee for all Thou didst wish to suffer for me in Bethlehem, for Thy poverty and humility, for Thy nakedness, tears, cold, and sufferings.

**W**ould that I could show Thee that tenderness which Thy Virgin Mother had toward Thee, and love Thee as she loved Thee. Would that I could praise Thee with the joy of the angels; that I could kneel before Thee with the faith of Saint Joseph; the simplicity of the shepherds. Uniting myself with these first worshiper at the crib, I offer Thee the homage of my heart and I beg that Thou wouldst be born spiritually in my soul. Give me, I pray Thee, the virtues of Thy blessed Nativity. Fill me with that spirit of renunciation, of poverty, of humility, which prompted Thee to assume the weakness of our nature, and to be born amid destitution and suffering. Grant that from this day forward I may in all things seek Thy greater glory, and may enjoy that peace promised to men of good will. Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

### *Prayer to the Holy Infant Jesus in the Crib*

**All Hail!** Most lovely, Most Holy, most amiable, and loving Infant Jesus, King of my soul. Ah! Blessed by the hour in which Thy Holy Mother will give Thee to me as my ransom. O, most beautiful above the children of men! Give me grace to prepare to receive Thee worthily on the glorious Feast of Thy Nativity. Give me a heart all glowing with Holy desires, love, gratitude, and ardent zeal to correspond with the designs which bring Thee on earth. Give me the true spirit of Thy Holy Nativity, a spirit of humility, silence, detachment, docility, meekness, and true and ardent charity. Give me grace daily to advance in devotions to Thy Blessed Infancy, and faithfully to persevere in the discharge of all my duties in spite of the allurements of Satan, or the scoffing of the world.

### **PRAYER TO THE INFANT JESUS**

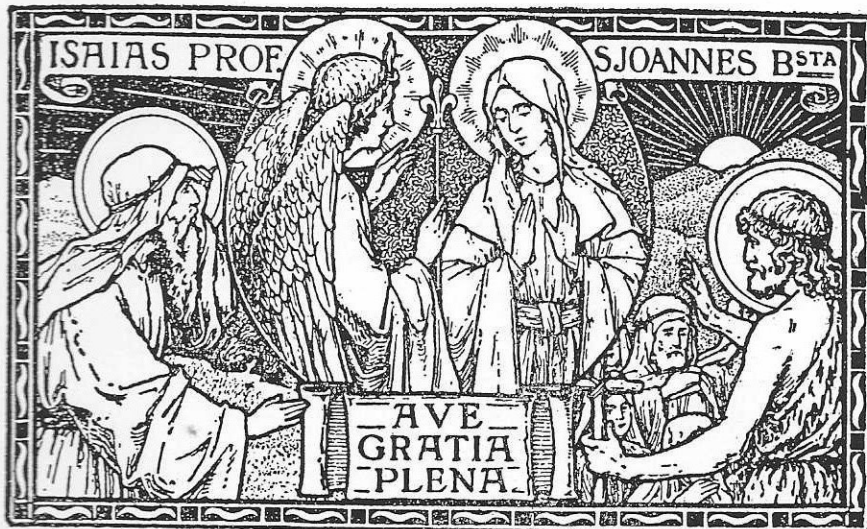
**C**ome to me, O Divine Savior, vouchsafe to be born in my heart. Grant that, taught by Thine example, and assisted by Thy grace, I may be poor in spirit and humble of heart. Keep me chaste and obedient. I wish to live but for Thee, and to do all things purely for love of Thee. O Mary, my Advocate and Mother, obtain by thy prayers forgiveness of my past offences and holy perseverance unto death. St. Joseph, do thou also pray for me, that I may become daily more pleasing to Jesus. Amen.

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# Advent



## TEMPORAL CYCLE

### FIRST PART OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR CYCLE OF CHRISTMAS

#### THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

**Season of Advent.** First Sunday of Advent to December 24.

**Christmastide.** December 24 to January 13.

**Time after Epiphany.** January 14 to Septuagesima Sunday.

In her liturgical cycle the Church, to whom God has committed the work of our sanctification, has instituted a method of holiness whose aim is to make our souls like Christ Himself, for as St. Paul tells us, the Father has predestined us "to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. VIII, 29).

Every year, therefore, the Church keeps the different anniversaries connected with our Lord's life to enable us to take part in all His mysteries, to offer them in homage to almighty God at Holy Mass, and ever more and more to experience their salutary effects within our souls.

The Church, whose petitions are always heard by almighty God, asks for us the graces which correspond to the different feasts which she keeps. For this reason it is of the greatest importance that we should recognize the characteristic spirit of each season of the Church's liturgical year.

If we permit ourselves to be guided in this way throughout the whole year by our Holy Mother the Church, we shall accomplish our sanctification most methodically and we shall glorify God.

## **The Liturgical Year - Advent**

(taken from the Saint Andrew Daily Missal, 1952)

"In the Temporal Cycle of her liturgical year the Church, to whom God has committed the work of our sanctification, has instituted a method of holiness with the purpose of making our souls like Christ Himself, for as St. Paul tells us, the Father has predestined us 'to be made conformable to the image of His Son.' Each liturgical season represents one particular aspect of our Lord's life and has a special efficacy for our sanctification. Every year in the holy sacrifice of the Mass we can offer to God all that is contained in these mysteries of our Savior for His Father's glory and receive in Holy Communion the graces they comprise.

To be convinced of this we have only to study the Missal and we shall find that the Church asks on our behalf the graces which corresponds to the different feasts which she keeps. For this reason it is of the greatest importance that we should recognize the characteristic spirit of each season of the Church's liturgical year, that we may always put ourselves in the necessary dispositions for rendering to almighty God that peculiar glory, which the season brings and to benefit by its special graces. If we let ourselves be guided by Holy Mother the Church, we shall accomplish our sanctification most methodically and we shall glorify God, as the psalmist says, "according to the greatness of His power."

**4 weeks of Advent commemorate  
the 4000 years of prayers of petition and appeal and longing  
for the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom -**

**"O EMMANUEL (God with us), OUR KING AND LAWGIVER, COME AND SAVE US, O LORD OUR GOD."**

"This coming of Christ which the Prophets foretold and to which God's people looked forward is twofold in character; it is at the same time the coming of mercy in which the Divine Redeemer appeared on earth in the lowly state of His human life, and the coming to judgment when He will appear full of glory and majesty at the end of the world as Judge and supreme rewarder of men. These two comings have the same end in view since if the Son of God has descended to our level in becoming man (the FIRST COMING), it is in order to enable us to ascend to His Father by bringing us into His heavenly kingdom (the SECOND COMING). And the sentence which will be passed by the Son of Man, to Whom will be committed all judgement, when He comes a second time into the world, will depend upon the welcome which awaited Him when He came the first. All who have denied Christ upon earth He will banish from His presence, damning them forever, but those who have welcomed Him with faith and love He will lead at once into His Father's kingdom. From this we see the great function of Advent:

It is the season which prepares us to receive our Lord with the necessary dispositions, in His first coming of which the Christmas celebrations are the Church's official anniversary, and is an actual application of the graces of the Incarnation; in this way it prepares us to be among the number of the "blessed of My Father" when our Redeemer shall come for the second time."

"During this season the Church's Liturgy will bring before us the two comings, so that we may look forward with the same confidence to the coming of the Babe of the manger, Who is going to be born more and more within us by the graces of Christmas and also to the coming of our sovereign Judge, Who will bring us into His kingdom and separate us from evildoers, putting a great chasm between them and us. Helpful indeed is the liturgy of the season, since it prepares us to celebrate the First Coming of Our Lord in its relation to the Second Coming, that profiting by His graces as Redeemer, we need not fear His punishments as Judge.

**Grant, that we who now joyfully receive Thine only-begotten Son as our Redeemer,  
may also, without fear, behold Him coming as our Judge."**

**(Collect for the Vigil of the Nativity)**

## **The Mystery of Advent -**

(taken from "*The Liturgical Year*" by Abbott Gueranger, O.S.B., Vol. I, 1867)

We find this mystery of the coming, or advent, of Jesus is at once simple and threefold. It is simple, for it is the one same Son of God that is coming; it is threefold, because He comes at three different times and in three different ways.

St. Bernard says...

In the **first** coming, He comes in the **flesh and in weakness**;  
in the **second**, He comes in **spirit and in power**;  
in the **third**, He comes in **glory and in majesty**;  
and the second coming is the means whereby we pass from the first to the third.

This, then, is the mystery of Advent. Let us now listen to the explanation of this threefold visit of Christ, given to us by Peter of Blois, in his third Sermon de Adventu:

"There are three comings of our Lord:  
the first in the **flesh**, the second in the **soul**, the third at the **judgement**.

The first was at midnight, according to those words of the Gospel, 'At midnight there was a cry made, Lo the Bridegroom cometh!' But this first coming is long since past, for Christ has been seen on the earth and has conversed among men.

We are now in the second coming, provided only we are such as that He may thus come to us, for He has said that if we love Him, He will come unto us and will take up His abode with us.

As for the third coming, it is most certain that it will be, most uncertain when it will be, for nothing is more sure than death, and nothing less sure than the hour of death.

So the first coming was **humble and hidden**;  
the second is **mysterious and full of love**;  
the third will be **majestic and terrible**.

In the first coming **Christ was judged by men unjustly**;  
in His second, **He renders us just by His grace**;  
in the third, **He will judge all things with justice**.

In His **first**, a **lamb**;  
in His **last**, a **lion**;  
**in the one in between, the tenderest of friends.**"

## CHAPTER THE SECOND

## THE MYSTERY OF ADVENT

IF, now that we have described the characteristic features of Advent which distinguish it from the rest of the year, we would penetrate into the profound mystery which occupies the mind of the Church during this season, we find that this mystery of the coming, or *Advent*, of Jesus is at once simple and threefold. It is simple, for it is the one same Son of God that is coming; it is threefold, because He comes at three different times and in three different ways.

'In the first coming,' says St. Bernard, 'He comes in the flesh and in weakness; in the second, He comes in spirit and in power; in the third, He comes in glory and in majesty; and the second coming is the means whereby we pass from the first to the third.'<sup>1</sup>

This, then, is the mystery of Advent. Let us now listen to the explanation of this threefold visit of Christ, given to us by Peter of Blois, in his third Sermon *de Adventu*: 'There are three comings of our Lord; the first in the flesh, the second in the soul, the third at the judgement. The first was at midnight, according to those words of the Gospel: At midnight there was a cry made, Lo the Bridegroom cometh! But this first coming is long since past, for Christ has been seen on the earth and has conversed among men. We are now in the second coming, provided only we are such as that He may thus come to us; for He has said that if we love Him, He will come unto us and will take up His abode with us. So that this second coming is full of uncertainty to us; for who, save the Spirit of God, knows

<sup>1</sup> Fifth sermon for Advent.

them that are of God? They that are raised out of themselves by the desire of heavenly things, know indeed when He comes; but whence He cometh, or whither He goeth, they know not. As for the third coming, it is most certain that it will be, most uncertain when it will be; for nothing is more sure than death, and nothing less sure than the hour of death. When they shall say, peace and security, says the apostle, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child, and they shall not escape. So that the first coming was humble and hidden, the second is mysterious and full of love, the third will be majestic and terrible. In His first coming, Christ was judged by men unjustly; in His second, He renders us just by His grace; in His third, He will judge all things with justice. In His first, a lamb; in His last, a lion; in the one between the two, the tenderest of friends.'<sup>1</sup>

The holy Church, therefore, during Advent, awaits in tears and with ardour the arrival of her Jesus in His first coming. For this, she borrows the fervid expressions of the prophets, to which she joins her own supplications. These longings for the Messias expressed by the Church, are not a mere commemoration of the desires of the ancient Jewish people; they have a reality and efficacy of their own, an influence in the great act of God's munificence, whereby He gave us His own Son. From all eternity, the prayers of the ancient Jewish people and the prayers of the Christian Church ascended together to the prescient hearing of God; and it was after receiving and granting them, that He sent, in the appointed time, that blessed Dew upon the earth, which made it bud forth the Saviour.

The Church aspires also to the second coming, the consequence of the first, which consists, as we have just seen, in the visit of the Bridegroom to the bride. This coming takes place, each year, at the feast of

<sup>1</sup> *De Adventu*, Sermon III.

Christmas, when the new birth of the Son of God delivers the faithful from that yoke of bondage, under which the enemy would oppress them.<sup>1</sup> The Church, therefore, during Advent, prays that she may be visited by Him who is her Head and her Spouse; visited in her hierarchy; visited in her members, of whom some are living, and some are dead, but may come to life again; visited, lastly, in those who are not in communion with her, and even in the very infidels, that so they may be converted to the true light, which shines even for them. The expressions of the liturgy which the Church makes use of to ask for this loving and invisible coming, are those which she employs when begging for the coming of Jesus in the flesh; for the two visits are for the same object. In vain would the Son of God have come, nineteen hundred years ago, to visit and save mankind, unless He came again for each one of us and at every moment of our lives, bringing to us and cherishing within us that supernatural life, of which He and His holy Spirit are the sole principle.

But this annual visit of the Spouse does not content the Church; she aspires after a third coming, which will complete all things by opening the gates of eternity. She has caught up the last words of her Spouse, 'Surely I am coming quickly',<sup>2</sup> and she cries out to Him, 'Ah! Lord Jesus! come!'<sup>3</sup> She is impatient to be loosed from her present temporal state; she longs for the number of the elect to be filled up, and to see appear, in the clouds of heaven, the sign of her Deliverer and her Spouse. Her desires, expressed by her Advent liturgy, go even as far as this; and here we have the explanation of these words of the beloved disciple in his prophecy: 'The nuptials of the Lamb are come, and His wife hath prepared herself.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Collect for Christmas day.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Apoc. xxii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 7.

But the day of this His last coming to her will be a day of terror. The Church frequently trembles at the very thought of that awful judgement, in which all mankind is to be tried. She calls it 'a day of wrath, on which, as David and the Sibyl have foretold, the world will be reduced to ashes; a day of weeping and of fear.' Not that she fears for herself, since she knows that this day will for ever secure for her the crown, as being the bride of Jesus; but her maternal heart is troubled at the thought that, on the same day, so many of her children will be on the left hand of the Judge, and, having no share with the elect, will be bound hand and foot, and cast into the darkness, where there shall be everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is the reason why the Church, in the liturgy of Advent, so frequently speaks of the coming of Christ as a terrible coming, and selects from the Scriptures those passages which are most calculated to awaken a salutary fear in the mind of such of her children as may be sleeping the sleep of sin.

This, then, is the threefold mystery of Advent. The liturgical forms in which it is embodied, are of two kinds: the one consists of prayers, passages from the Bible, and similar formulæ, in all of which, words themselves are employed to convey the sentiments which we have been explaining; the other consists of external rites peculiar to this holy time, which, by speaking to the outward senses, complete the expressiveness of the chants and words.

First of all, there is the number of the days of Advent. Forty was the number originally adopted by the Church, and it is still maintained in the Ambrosian liturgy, and in the eastern Church. If, at a later period, the Church of Rome, and those which follow her liturgy, have changed the number of days, the same idea is still expressed in the four weeks which have been substituted for the forty days. The new birth of our Redeemer takes place after four

weeks, as the first nativity happened after four thousand years, according to the Hebrew and Vulgate chronology.

As in Lent, so likewise during Advent, marriage is not solemnized, lest worldly joy should distract Christians from those serious thoughts wherewith the expected coming of the sovereign Judge ought to inspire them, or from that dearly cherished hope which the friends of the Bridegroom<sup>1</sup> have of being soon called to the eternal nuptial-feast.

The people are forcibly reminded of the sadness which fills the heart of the Church, by the sombre colour of the vestments. Excepting on the feasts of the saints, purple is the colour she uses; the deacon does not wear the dalmatic, nor the sub-deacon the tunic. Formerly it was the custom, in some places, to wear black vestments. This mourning of the Church shows how fully she unites herself with those true Israelites of old who, clothed in sack-cloth and ashes, waited for the Messias, and bewailed Sion that she had not her beauty, and 'Juda, that the sceptre had been taken from him, till He should come who was to be sent, the expectation of nations.'<sup>2</sup> It also signifies the works of penance, whereby she prepares for the second coming, full as it is of sweetness and mystery, which is realized in the souls of men, in proportion as they appreciate the tender love of that divine Guest, who has said: 'My delights are to be with the children of men.'<sup>3</sup> It expresses, thirdly, the desolation of this bride who yearns after her Beloved, who is long a-coming. Like the turtle dove, she moans her loneliness, longing for the voice which will say to her: 'Come from Libanus, my bride! come, thou shalt be crowned. Thou hast wounded my heart.'<sup>4</sup>

The Church also, during Advent, excepting on the

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. viii. 31

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xlix. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Cant. iv. 8, 9.

feasts of saints, suppresses the angelic canticle, *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis*; for this glorious song was sung at Bethlehem over the crib of the divine Babe; the tongues of the angels are not loosened yet; the Virgin has not yet brought forth her divine Treasure; it is not yet time to sing, it is not even true to say, 'Glory be to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will.'

Again, at the end of Mass, the deacon does not dismiss the assembly of the faithful by the words: *Itē missa est*. He substitutes the ordinary greeting: *Benedicamus Domino!* as though the Church feared to interrupt the prayers of the people, which could scarce be too long during these days of expectation.

In the night Office, the holy Church also suspends, on those same days, the hymn of jubilation, *Te Deum laudamus!* It is in deep humility that she awaits the supreme blessing which is to come to her; and, in the interval, she presumes only to ask, and entreat, and hope. But let the glorious hour come, when in the midst of darkest night the Sun of justice will suddenly rise upon the world: then indeed she will resume her hymn of thanksgiving, and all over the face of the earth the silence of midnight will be broken by this shout of enthusiasm: 'We praise Thee, O God! we acknowledge Thee to be our Lord! Thou, O Christ, art the King of glory, the everlasting Son of the Father! Thou being to deliver man didst not disdain the Virgin's womb!'

On the ferial days, the rubrics of Advent prescribe that certain prayers should be said kneeling, at the end of each canonical Hour, and that the choir should also kneel during a considerable portion of the Mass. In this respect, the usages of Advent are precisely the same as those of Lent.

But there is one feature which distinguishes Ad-

<sup>1</sup> The monastic rite retains it. [Tr.]

vent most markedly from Lent : the word of gladness, the joyful *Alléluia*, is not interrupted during Advent, except once or twice during the ferial Office. It is sung in the Masses of the four Sundays, and vividly contrasts with the sombre colour of the vestments.

On one of these Sundays, the third, the prohibition of using the organ is removed, and we are gladdened by its grand notes, and rose-coloured vestments may be used instead of the purple. These vestiges of joy, thus blended with the holy mournfulness of the Church, tell us, in a most expressive way, that though she unites with the ancient people of God in praying for the coming of the Messias (thus paying the debt which the entire human race owes to the justice and mercy of God), she does not forget that the Emmanuel is already come to her, that He is in her, and that even before she has opened her lips to ask Him to save her, she has been already redeemed and predestined to an eternal union with Him. This is the reason why the *Alléluia* accompanies even her sighs, and why she seems to be at once joyous and sad, waiting for the coming of that holy night which will be brighter to her than the most sunny of days, and on which her joy will expel all her sorrow.

## CHAPTER THE THIRD

### PRACTICE DURING ADVENT

If our holy mother the Church spends the time of Advent in this solemn preparation for the threefold coming of Jesus Christ ; if, after the example of the prudent virgins, she keeps her lamp lit ready for the coming of the Bridegroom ; we, being her members and her children, ought to enter into her spirit, and apply to ourselves this warning of our Saviour : ' Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and ye yourselves be like unto men who wait for their Lord ! ' <sup>1</sup> The Church and we have, in reality, the same hopes. Each one of us is, on the part of God, an object of mercy and care, as is the Church herself. If she is the temple of God, it is because she is built of living stones ; if she is the bride, it is because she consists of all the souls which are invited to eternal union with God. If it is written that the Saviour hath purchased the Church with His own Blood, <sup>2</sup> may not each one of us say of himself those words of St. Paul, ' Christ hath loved me, and hath delivered Himself up for me ' ? <sup>3</sup> Our destiny being the same, then, as that of the Church, we should endeavour during Advent, to enter into the spirit of preparation, which is, as we have seen, that of the Church herself.

And firstly, it is our duty to join with the saints of the old Law in asking for the Messias, and thus pay the debt which the whole human race owes to the divine mercy. In order to fulfil this duty with fervour, let us go back in thought to those four thousand years, represented by the four weeks of Advent, and reflect on the darkness and crime which filled the world before our Saviour's coming. Let

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xii. 35, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 20.



our hearts be filled with lively gratitude towards Him who saved His creature man from death, and who came down from heaven that He might know our miseries by Himself experiencing them, yes, all of them excepting sin. Let us cry to Him with confidence from the depths of our misery; for, notwithstanding His having saved the work of His hands, He still wishes us to beseech Him to save us. Let therefore our desires and our confidence have their free utterance in the ardent supplications of the ancient prophets, which the Church puts on our lips during these days of expectation; let us give our closest attention to the sentiments which they express.

This first duty complied with, we must next turn our minds to the coming which our Saviour wishes to accomplish in our own hearts. It is, as we have seen, a coming full of sweetness and mystery, and a consequence of the first; for the good Shepherd comes not only to visit the flock in general, but He extends His solicitude to each one of the sheep, even to the hundredth which is lost. Now, in order to appreciate the whole of this ineffable mystery, we must remember that, since we can be pleasing to our heavenly Father only inasmuch as He sees within us His Son Jesus Christ, this amiable Saviour deigns to come into each one of us, and transform us, if we will but consent, into Himself, so that henceforth we may live, not we, but He in us. This is, in reality, the one grand aim of the Christian religion, to make man divine through Jesus Christ: it is the task which God has given to His Church to do, and she says to the faithful what St. Paul said to his Galatians: 'My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed within you!'<sup>1</sup>

But as, on His entering into this world, our divine Saviour first showed Himself under the form of a weak Babe, before attaining the fulness of the age of

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 19.

manhood, and this to the end that nothing might be wanting to His sacrifice, so does He intend to do in us; there is to be a progress in His growth within us. Now, it is at the feast of Christmas that He delights to be born in our souls, and that He pours out over the whole Church a grace of being born, to which, however, not all are faithful.

For this glorious solemnity, as often as it comes round, finds three classes of men. The first, and the smallest number, are those who live, in all its plenitude, the life of Jesus who is within them, and aspire incessantly after the increase of this life. The second class of souls is more numerous; they are living, it is true, because Jesus is in them; but they are sick and weakly, because they care not to grow in this divine life; their charity has become cold!<sup>1</sup> The rest of men make up the third division, and are they that have no part of this life in them, and are dead; for Christ has said: 'I am the Life.'<sup>2</sup>

Now, during the season of Advent, our Lord knocks at the door of all men's hearts, at one time so forcibly that they must needs notice Him; at another, so softly that it requires attention to know that Jesus is asking admission. He comes to ask them if they have room for Him, for He wishes to be born in their house. The house indeed is His, for he built it and preserves it; yet He complains that His own refused to receive Him;<sup>3</sup> at least the greater number did. 'But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, born not of blood, nor of the flesh, but of God.'<sup>4</sup>

He will be born, then, with more beauty and lustre and might than you have hitherto seen in Him, O ye faithful ones, who hold Him within you as your only treasure, and who have long lived no other life than His, shaping your thoughts and works on the

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* i. 11.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* i. 13.

model of His. You will feel the necessity of words to suit and express your love; such words as He delights to hear you speak to Him. You will find them in the holy liturgy.

You, who have had Him within you without knowing Him, and have possessed Him without relishing the sweetness of His presence, open your hearts to welcome Him, this time, with more care and love. He repeats His visit of this year with an untring tenderness; He has forgotten your past slights; He would 'that all things be new.'<sup>1</sup> Make room for the divine Infant, for He desires to grow within your soul. The time of His coming is close at hand: let your heart, then, be on the watch; and lest you should slumber when He arrives, watch and pray, yea, sing. The words of the liturgy are intended also for your use: they speak of darkness, which only God can enlighten; of wounds, which only His mercy can heal; of a faintness, which can be braced only by His divine energy.

And you, Christians, for whom the good tidings are as things that are not, because you are dead in sin, lo! He who is very life is coming among you. Yes, whether this death of sin has held you as its slave for long years, or has but freshly inflicted on you the wound which made you its victim, Jesus, your Life, is coming: 'why, then, will you die? He desireth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.'<sup>2</sup> The grand feast of His birth will be a day of mercy for the whole world; at least, for all who will give Him admission into their hearts: they will rise to life again in Him, their past life will be destroyed, and where sin abounded, there grace will more abound.<sup>3</sup>

But, if the tenderness and the attractiveness of this mysterious coming make no impression on you, because your heart is too weighed down to be able to

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. xxi. 5.    <sup>2</sup> Ezechiel xviii. 31, 32.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 20.

rise to confidence, and because, having so long drunk sin like water, you know not what it is to long with love for the caresses of a Father whom you have slighted—then turn your thoughts to that other coming, which is full of terror, and is to follow the silent one of grace that is now offered. Think within yourselves, how this earth of ours will tremble at the approach of the dread Judge; how the heavens will flee from before His face, and fold up as a book;<sup>1</sup> how man will wince under His angry look; how the creature will wither away with fear, as the two-edged sword, which comes from the mouth of his Creator,<sup>2</sup> pierces him; and how sinners will cry out, 'Ye mountains, fall on us! ye rocks, cover us!'<sup>3</sup> Those unhappy souls who would not know the time of their visitation,<sup>4</sup> shall then vainly wish to hide themselves from the face of Jesus. They shut their hearts against this Man-God, who, in His excessive love for them, wept over them: therefore, on the day of judgement they will descend alive into those everlasting fires, whose flame devoureth the earth with her increase, and burneth the foundations of the mountains.<sup>5</sup> The worm that never dieth,<sup>6</sup> the useless eternal repentance, will gnaw them for ever.

Let those, then, who are not touched by the tidings of the coming of the heavenly Physician and the good Shepherd who giveth His life for His sheep, meditate during Advent on the awful yet certain truth, that so many render the redemption unavailable to themselves by refusing to co-operate in their own salvation. They may treat the Child who is to be born<sup>7</sup> with disdain; but He is also the mighty God, and do they think they can withstand Him on that day, when He is to come, not to save, as now, but to judge? Would that they knew more of this

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. vi. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* i. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. xxxii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 30.

<sup>6</sup> St. Mark ix. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Is. ix. 6.

divine Judge, before whom the very saints tremble! Let these, also, use the liturgy of this season, and they will there learn how much He is to be feared by sinners.

We would not imply by this that only sinners need to fear; no, every Christian ought to fear. Fear, when there is no nobler sentiment with it, makes man a slave; when it accompanies love, it is a feeling which fills the heart of a child who has offended his father, yet seeks for pardon; when, at length, love casteth out fear,<sup>1</sup> even then this holy fear will sometimes come, and, like a flash of lightning, pervade the deepest recesses of the soul. It does the soul good. She wakes up afresh to a keener sense of her own misery and of the unmerited mercy of her Redeemer. Let no one, therefore, think that he may safely pass his Advent without taking any share in the holy fear which animates the Church. She, though so beloved by God, prays to Him to give her this fear; and in her Office of Sext, she thus cries out to Him: 'Pierce my flesh with Thy fear.' It is, however, to those who are beginning a good life, that this part of the Advent liturgy will be peculiarly serviceable.

It is evident, from what we have said, that Advent is a season specially devoted to the exercises of what is called the *purgative life*, which is implied in that expression of St. John, so continually repeated by the Church during this holy time: Prepare ye the way of the Lord! Let all, therefore, strive earnestly to make straight the path by which Jesus will enter into their souls. Let the just, agreeably to the teaching of the apostle, forget the things that are behind,<sup>2</sup> and labour to acquire fresh merit. Let sinners begin at once and break the chains which now enslave them. Let them give up those bad habits which they have contracted. Let them weaken the flesh, and enter upon the hard work of subjecting

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. John iv. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 13.

it to the spirit. Let them, above all things, pray with the Church. And when our Lord comes, they may hope that He will not pass them by, but that He will enter and dwell within them; for He spoke of all when He said these words: 'Behold I stand at the gate and knock: if any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in unto him.'<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH

### MORNING AND NIGHT PRAYERS FOR ADVENT

DURING Advent, the Christian, on awaking in the morning, will unite himself with the Church, who, in her Office of Matins, says to us these solemn words, which choirs of religious, men and women, throughout the universe, have been chanting during the deep silence of the night:

Regem venturum Domi- Come, let us adore the King  
num, venite, adoremus. our Lord, who is to come!

He will profoundly adore this great King, whose coming is so near at hand: and with this idea deeply impressed upon his mind, he will perform the first acts of religion, both interior and exterior, where-with he begins the day. The time for morning prayer being come, he may use the following method, which is formed upon the very prayers of the Church:—

### MORNING PRAYERS

First, praise and adoration of the most holy Trinity:—

V. Benedicamus Patrem, et V. Let us bless the Father,  
Patum, cum sancto Spiritu. and the Son, and the Holy  
Ghost.

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. iii. 20.

I invite thee to it by the sweet law of love which accompanies my instruction. Ponder and scrutinize, by the divine light, the obligation under which I place thee, and labor to correspond with it like a faithful and anxious child. Let no difficulty or hardship disturb thee, nor deter thee from any virtuous exercise, no matter how hard it may be. Nor be content with striving after the love of God and salvation of thyself alone; if thou wouldst be perfect in imitating me and fulfilling all that the Gospel teaches, thou must work for the salvation of other souls and the exaltation of the holy name of my Son, making thyself an instrument in his powerful hands for the accomplishment of mighty works to advance his pleasure and glory.

## CHAPTER X.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR IS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN  
BETHLEHEM, JUDA.

468. The palace which the supreme King of kings and the Lord of lords had chosen for entertaining his eternal and incarnate Son in this world was a most poor and insignificant hut or cave, to which most holy Mary and Joseph betook themselves after they had been denied all hospitality and the most ordinary kindness by their fellow-men, as I have described in the foregoing chapter. This place was held in such contempt that though the town of Bethlehem was full of strangers in want of night-shelter, none would demean or degrade himself so far as to make use of it for a lodging; for there was none who deemed it suitable or desirable for such a purpose, except the Teachers of humility and poverty, Christ our Savior and his purest Mother. On this account the wisdom of the eternal Father had reserved it for Them, consecrating it in all its bareness, loneliness and poverty as the first temple of light (Malachy 4, 2, Ps. 111, 4) and as the house of the true Sun of justice, which was to arise for the upright of heart from the resplendent Aurora Mary, turning the night of sin into the daylight of grace.

469. Most holy Mary and saint Joseph entered the lodging thus provided for them and by the effulgence of the ten thousand angels of their guard they could easily ascertain its poverty and loneliness, which they esteemed as favors and welcomed with tears of consolation and joy. Without delay the two holy travelers fell on their

knees and praised the Lord, giving Him thanks for his benefit, which they knew had been provided by his wisdom for his own hidden designs. Of this mystery the heavenly Princess Mary had a better insight; for as soon as She sanctified the interior of the cave by her sacred footsteps She felt a fullness of joy which entirely elevated and vivified Her. She besought the Lord to bless with a liberal hand all the inhabitants of the neighboring city, because by rejecting Her they had given occasion to the vast favors, which She awaited in this neglected cavern. It was formed entirely of the bare and coarse rocks, without any natural beauty or artificial adornment; a place intended merely for the shelter of animals; yet the eternal Father had selected it for the shelter and dwelling-place of his own Son.

470. The angelic spirits, who like a celestial militia guarded their Queen and Mistress, formed themselves into cohorts in the manner of court guards in a royal palace. They showed themselves in their visible forms also to saint Joseph; for on this occasion it was befitting that he should enjoy such a favor, on the one hand in order to assuage his sorrow by allowing him to behold this poor lodging thus beautified and adorned by their celestial presence, and on the other, in order to enliven and encourage him for the events which the Lord intended to bring about during that night, and in this forsaken place. The great Queen and Empress, who was already informed of the mystery to be transacted here, set about cleaning with her own hands the cave, which was so soon to serve as a royal throne and sacred mercy-seat; for neither did She want to miss this occasion for exercising her humility, nor would She deprive her only-begotten Son of the worship and reverence implied by this preparation and cleansing of his temple.

471. Saint Joseph, mindful of the majesty of his heavenly Spouse (which, it seemed to him, She was forgetting in her ardent longing for humiliation), besought Her not to deprive Him of this work, which he considered as his alone; and he hastened to set about cleaning the floor and the corners of the cave, although the humble Queen continued to assist him therein. As the holy angels were then present in visible forms, they were (according to our mode of speaking) abashed at such eagerness for humiliation, and they speedily emulated with each other to join in this work; or rather, in order to say it more succinctly, in the shortest time possible they had cleansed and set in order that cave, filling it with holy fragrance. Saint Joseph started a fire with the material which he had brought for that purpose. As it was very cold, they sat at the fire in order to get warm. They partook of the food which they had brought, and they ate this, their frugal supper, with incomparable joy of their souls. The Queen of heaven was so absorbed and taken up with the thought of the impending mystery of her divine delivery, that She would not have partaken of food if She had not been urged thereto by obedience to her spouse.

472. After their supper they gave thanks to the Lord as was their custom. Having spent a short time in this prayer and conferring about the mysteries of the incarnate Word, the most prudent Virgin felt the approach of the most blessed Birth. She requested her spouse saint Joseph to betake himself to rest and sleep as the night was already far advanced. The man of God yielded to the request of his Spouse and urged Her to do the same; and for this purpose he arranged and prepared a sort of couch with the articles of wear in their possession, making use of a crib or manger, that had been

left by the shepherds for their animals. Leaving most holy Mary in the portion of the cave thus furnished, saint Joseph retired to a corner of the entrance, where he began to pray. He was immediately visited by the divine Spirit and felt a most sweet and extraordinary influence, by which he was wrapt and elevated into an ecstasy. In it was shown him all that passed during that night in this blessed cave; for he did not return to consciousness until his heavenly Spouse called him. Such was the sleep which saint Joseph enjoyed in that night, more exalted and blessed than that of Adam in paradise (Gen. 21, 2).

473. The Queen of all creatures was called from her resting-place by a loud voice of the Most High, which strongly and sweetly raised Her above all created things and caused Her to feel new effects of divine power; for this was one of the most singular and admirable ecstasies of her most holy life. Immediately also She was filled with new enlightenment and divine influences, such as I have described in other places, until She reached the clear vision of the Divinity. The veil fell and She saw intuitively the Godhead itself in such glory and plenitude of insight, as all the capacity of men and angels could not describe or fully understand. All the knowledge of the Divinity and humanity of her most holy Son, which She had ever received in former visions was renewed and, moreover, other secrets of the inexhaustible archives of the bosom of God were revealed to Her. I have not ideas or words sufficient and adequate for expressing what I have been allowed to see of these sacraments by the divine light; and their abundance and multiplicity convince me of the poverty and want of proper expression in created language.

474. The Most High announced to his Virgin Mother,

that the time of his coming into the world had arrived and what would be the manner in which this was now to be fulfilled and executed. The most prudent Lady perceived in this vision the purpose and exalted scope of these wonderful mysteries and sacraments, as well in so far as related to the Lord himself as also in so far as they concerned creatures, for whose benefit they had been primarily decreed. She prostrated Herself before the throne of his Divinity and gave Him glory, magnificence, thanks and praise for Himself and for all creatures, such as was befitting the ineffable mercy and condescension of his divine love. At the same time She asked of the divine Majesty new light and grace in order to be able worthily to undertake the service and worship and the rearing up of the Word made flesh, whom She was to bear in Her arms and nourish with her virginal milk. This petition the heavenly Mother brought forward with the profoundest humility, as one who understood the greatness of this new sacrament. She held Herself unworthy of the office of rearing up and conversing as a Mother with a God incarnate of which even the highest seraphim are incapable. Prudently and humbly did the Mother of wisdom ponder and weigh this matter. And because She humbled Herself to the dust and acknowledged her nothingness in the presence of the Almighty, therefore his Majesty raised Her up and confirmed anew upon Her the title of *Mother of God*. He commanded Her to exercise this office and ministry of a legitimate and true Mother of Himself; that She should treat Him as the Son of the eternal Father and at the same time the Son of her womb. All this could be easily entrusted to such a Mother, in whom was contained an excellence that words cannot express.

475. The most holy Mary remained in this ecstasy and

beatific vision for over an hour immediately preceding her divine delivery. At the moment when She issued from it and regained the use of her senses She felt and saw that the body of the infant God began to move in her virginal womb; how, releasing and freeing Himself from the place which in the course of nature He had occupied for nine months, He now prepared to issue forth from that sacred bridal chamber. This movement not only did not cause any pain or hardship, as happens with the other daughters of Adam and Eve in their child-births; but filled Her with incomparable joy and delight, causing in her soul and in her virginal body such exalted and divine effects that they exceed all thoughts of men. Her body became so spiritualized with the beauty of heaven that She seemed no more a human and earthly creature. Her countenance emitted rays of light, like a sun incarnadined, and shone in indescribable earnestness and majesty, all inflamed with fervent love. She was kneeling in the manger, her eyes raised to heaven, her hands joined and folded at her breast, her soul wrapped in the Divinity and She herself was entirely deified. In this position, and at the end of the heavenly rapture, the most exalted Lady gave to the world the Onlybegotten of the Father and her own, our Savior Jesus, true God and man, at the hour of midnight, on a Sunday, in the year of the creation of the world five thousand one hundred and ninety-nine (5199), which is the date given in the Roman Church, and which date has been manifested to me as the true and certain one.

476. There are other wonderful circumstances and particulars, which all the faithful assume to have miraculously accompanied this most divine Birth; but as the only witnesses were the Queen of heaven and her courtiers, they cannot all be certified, except only those which

the Lord himself manifests in his holy Church to all or to some particular souls in diverse ways. As I think there is some divergence of opinion in this matter, which is most sublime and venerable, as soon as I had manifested to my superiors and directors what had been made known to me, they commanded me under obedience to consult anew the divine oracle and ask the Empress of heaven, my Mother and Teacher, and the holy angels that attend on me, for information on some particulars necessary for a clearer statement of the most sacred parturition of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, our Redeemer. In order to comply with this command I returned for a better understanding of these same happenings and it was then expounded to me in the following manner:

477. At the end of the beatific rapture and vision of the Mother ever Virgin, which I have described above (No. 473), was born the Sun of Justice, the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father and of Mary most pure, beautiful, refulgent and immaculate, leaving Her untouched in her virginal integrity and purity and making Her more god-like and forever sacred; for He did not divide, but penetrated the virginal chamber as the rays of the sun penetrate the crystal shrine, lighting it up in prismatic beauty. Before I describe the miraculous manner in which this took place, I wish to say that the divine Child was born pure and disengaged, without the protecting shield called *secundina*, surrounded by which other children are commonly born, and in which they are enveloped in the wombs of their mothers. I will not detain myself in explaining the cause and origin of the error, which is contrary to this statement. It is enough to know and suppose that in the generation and birth of the incarnate Word the arm of the Almighty selected and made use of all that substantially and unavoidably belonged to natural human

generation, so that the Word could truly call Himself conceived and engendered as a true man and born of the substance of his Mother ever Virgin. In regard to the other circumstances, which are not essential but accidental to generation and nativity, we must disconnect our ideas of Christ our Lord and of the most holy Mary not only from all that are in any way related or consequent upon any sin, original or actual; but also from many others which are not necessary for the essential reality of the generation or birth and which imply some impurity or superfluity, that could in any way lessen or impair the dignity of Mary as the Queen of heaven and as true Mother of Christ our Lord. For many such imperfections of sin or nature were not necessary either for the true humanity of Christ, or for his office of Redeemer or Teacher; and whatever was not necessary for these three ends, and whatever by its absence would redound to the greater dignity of Christ and his Mother, must be denied of Both. Nor must we be negligently in presuming wonderful intervention of the Author of nature and grace in favor of Her who was his worthy Mother, prepared, adorned and made increasingly beautiful for this purpose: for the divine right hand enriched Her at all times with gifts and graces and reached the utmost limits of his Omnipotence possible in regard to a mere creature.

478. In accordance with this truth her true motherhood was not impaired by her remaining a Virgin in his conception and birth through operation of the Holy Ghost. Although She could have lost her virginity in a natural manner without incurring any fault, yet in that case the Mother of God would also be without this singular prerogative of virginity. Therefore we must say, in order that She might not be without it, the divine power of her most holy Son preserved it for Her. Likewise the divine

Child could have been born with this covering or cuticle in which others are born; yet this was not necessary in order to be born a natural Son of the blessed Mother; hence He could choose not to take it forth with Him from the virginal and maternal womb, just as He chose not to pay to nature other penal tributes of impurity, which other human beings do pay at their coming into the light. It was not just that the incarnate Word should be subject to all the laws of the sons of Adam; but it was consequent upon his miraculous Birth that He be exempt and free from all that could be caused by the corruption or uncleanness of matter. Thus also this covering, or secundina, was not to fall a prey to corruption outside of the virginal womb, because it had been so closely connected and attached to his most holy body and because it was composed of the blood and substance of his Mother; in like manner it was not advisable to keep and preserve it outside of Her, nor was it becoming to give it the same privileges and importance as to his divine body in coming forth from the body of his most holy Mother, as I will yet explain. The wonder which would have to be wrought to dispose of that sacred covering outside of the womb could be wrought much more appropriately within.

479. The infant God therefore was brought forth from the virginal chamber unencumbered by any corporeal or material substance foreign to Himself. But He came forth glorious and transfigured for the divine and infinite wisdom decreed and ordained that the glory of his most holy soul should in his Birth overflow and communicate itself to his body, participating in the gifts of glory in the same way as happened afterwards in his Transfiguration on mount Tabor in the presence of the Apostles (Matth. 17, 2). This miracle was



not necessary in order to penetrate the virginal enclosure and to leave unimpaired the virginal integrity; for without this Transfiguration God could have brought this about by other miracles. Thus say the holy doctors, who see no other miracle in this Birth than that the Child was born without impairing the virginity of the Mother. It was the will of God that the most blessed Virgin should look upon the body of her Son, the God-man, for this first time in a glorified state for two reasons. The one was in order that by this divine vision the most prudent Mother should conceive the highest reverence for the Majesty of Him whom She was to treat as her Son, the true God-man. Although She was already informed of his two-fold nature, the Lord nevertheless ordained that by ocular demonstration She be filled with new graces, corresponding to the greatness of her most holy Son, which was thus manifested to Her in a visible manner. The second reason was to reward by this wonder the fidelity and holiness of the divine Mother; for her most pure and chaste eyes, that had turned away from all earthly things for love of her most holy Son, were to see Him at his very Birth in this glory and thus be rejoiced and rewarded for her loyalty and beautiful love.

480. The sacred evangelist Luke tells us that the Mother Virgin, having brought forth her firstbegotten Son, wrapped Him in swathing clothes and placed Him in a manger. He does not say that She received Him in her arms from her virginal womb; for this did not pertain to the purpose of his narrative. But the two sovereign princes, saint Michael and saint Gabriel, were the assistants of the Virgin on this occasion. They stood by at proper distance in human corporeal forms at the moment when the incarnate Word, penetrating the virginal chamber by divine power, issued forth to the light,

and they received Him in their hands with ineffable reverence. In the same manner as a priest exhibits the sacred host to the people for adoration, so these two celestial ministers presented to the divine Mother her glorious and refulgent Son. All this happened in a short space of time. In the same moment in which the holy angels thus presented the divine Child to his Mother, both Son and Mother looked upon each other, and in this look, She wounded with love the sweet Infant and was at the same time exalted and transformed in Him. From the arms of the holy princes the Prince of all the heavens spoke to his holy Mother: "Mother, become like unto Me, since on this day, for the human existence, which thou hast today given Me, I will give thee another more exalted existence in grace, assimilating thy existence as a mere creature to the likeness of Me, who am God and Man." The most prudent Mother answered: "Trahe me post Te, curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum" (Cant. 1, 3). Raise me, elevate me, Lord, and I will run after Thee in the odor of thy ointments. In the same way many of the hidden mysteries of the Canticles were fulfilled; and other sayings which passed between the infant God and the Virgin Mother had been recorded in that book of songs, as for instance: "My Beloved to me, and I to Him, and his desire is toward me" (Cant. 2, 16). "Behold thou art beautiful, my friend, and thy eyes are dove's eyes. Behold, my beloved, for thou art beautiful"; and many other sacramental words which to mention would unduly prolong this chapter.

481. The words, which most holy Mary heard from the mouth of her most holy Son, served to make Her understand at the same time the interior acts of his holiest soul united with the Divinity; in order that by imitating them She might become like unto Him. This

"THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS"

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From 1558 until 1829 the Catholics of England were forbidden by law to practice their Faith. As a result of this ban, the ingenious Catholics devised secretive and symbolic songs to teach their children the truths of their religion. One of the most successful and beautiful of these was the Christmas carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas".

The "Twelve Days" stand for the Christmas season - December 25th to January 6th. The "True Love" in the carol is God Himself, Who gives Christians special gifts on each of the twelve days.

The first gift is a "partridge in a pear tree". The bird stands for Christ, Who gathers His young under His wings. And the tree harkens back to the tree of Paradise, which Adam lost by sin and Christ promised to restore. God's first gift, therefore, is His very own Son - Jesus.

"Two turtle doves" is the second gift. The doves represent the sacrifice which a Jewish family had to make at the temple upon the birth of a son. Our sacrifice is the Divine Liturgy.

"Three French Hens" symbolize the three gifts of Faith, Hope, and Charity realized in the birth of the Savior.

"Four Calling Birds" makes us think of the four Evangelists whose four Gospels call us all to the Bethlehem manger of the Redeemer.

"Five Golden Rings" suggests the first five Books of the Old Testament, or Law, which Christ came to fulfill and complete.

"Six geese a-laying suggests the six days of the week when man labors and brings forth the fruit of the land.

"Seven swans a-swimming reminds man of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit or even the seven works of mercy.

And "Eight maids a-milking" represents the eight beatitudes that are the nourishment of Christians.

"Nine ladies dancing" recalls the nine choirs of angels (or the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit as mentioned by St. Paul in Galatians 5:22-23.

"Ten Lords a-leaping clearly signifies the ten commandments.

While the "Eleven pipers piping" refers to the eleven Apostles, now without Judas, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world.

Finally, "Twelve drummers drumming" reminds man of the twelve Articles of Faith of the Nicene Creed.

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REV. LAURENCE H. GIBNEY

TEN WAYS WE CAN  
ALL BEGIN NOW TO MAKE  
THIS ADVENT SOMETHING SPECIAL  
BY STARTING AN . . .

# Advent Club

**C**ATHOLICS are ruining Christmas, Father!"

This complaint was made to me early last December by an officer of a New York City bank. Because he was a good Catholic, I had asked him why he permitted his institution to commercialize Christmas by decorating the bank in mid-November with completely secular Christmas decorations. Now four weeks before December 25, sacred Christmas carols, made to sound like TV beer commercials, were being piped through the building.

Although this violated the spirit of Advent, the banker pointed out that this was what the public, the Catholic public, demanded. He reminded me that a nearby Catholic church had its Christmas crib on the parish lawn since the Sunday after Thanksgiving, that the Catholic Guild of his fellow employees was holding its annual Christmas party on December 9, that his children were singing Christmas carols in parochial school. "People accuse us of keeping Christ out of the market place when we don't go along," he said.

Another bank officer, a devout Episcopalian, had for years fought to check the premature and commercialized decorations. He would not attend Christmas parties during Advent, nor would he approve the use of Christmas carols to entice custom-

ers. "Catholic customers and fellow workers berated him the most," my friend told me. "They could not understand his argument that such commercialization degraded Christ, using Him as a boost for business."

The memory of this conversation came back to me during Christmas when I heard so many Christians deploring the pagan, greedy and extravagant aspects of the celebration of the feast. I saw more clearly the banker's point. Perhaps we are to blame.

Every year Catholics lament the improper celebration of Christmas when Christmas is actually upon us. We blame the storekeepers, the advertisers, radio and television, the public schools — everybody but ourselves. Yet people in these fields strive to give the public what it demands. They study us to see what our taste is, what will attract us, what we will buy. Christmas sales campaigns are planned months ahead of time, based on what we have patronized in the past.

Unfortunately, we Catholics to a great extent are carried along by these merely commercial, inartistic and unchristian displays. Then when Advent is over we grumble about how Christ has been removed from Christmas . . . when it is too late

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to do anything about it. By the next Advent we have usually forgotten last year's mistakes.

Businesses, on the other hand, keep a clear record of errors and start planning to remedy them the following year. Banks start their Christmas saving clubs 13 months ahead of time. Then those who have been caught short can start immediately to prepare for the next Christmas at the very time they are suffering from their mistake.

In a like manner I suggest that Catholics start informally now, months ahead of Christmas, an Advent Club. The only requirement for membership is a sense of disgust over the profanation of Christmas and the willingness to do something about it.

For the benefit of members I am giving 10 suggestions of ways to have a better Christmas this year. Some of these ideas have been practiced for years by veteran members of the Advent Club. The principle behind the club is not new. The Church enunciated it centuries ago when she gave us Advent. Members of the club will be able to think of other suggestions, perhaps more suitable to their circumstances and opportunities. Members will succeed in the restoration of Christmas if they are convinced that the only way to keep Christ in Christmas is to keep Him in Advent. Here are the 10 suggestions:

Reprint from 'Ave Maria' Magazine

(over)

**1** *Preaching.* Priests should start explaining the significance of Advent in early November at the latest. Just as the stores start weeks ahead of time to announce the number of days left before Christmas, so sermons should prepare us to be ready for Advent. But preachers should make it clear that Advent, far from being just a time of preparation for Christmas, is a sacred season having its own observances, teaching and special graces.

**2** *Decorations.* Members should not decorate for Christmas during Advent. We will use Advent wreaths, O-Antiphon towers, Advent scenes like the Annunciation, the Visitation, St. John the Baptist in the Desert, etc. Just as we do not decorate our churches, homes and schools for Easter during Lent and Passiontide, so we will not rush Christmas and spoil Advent by too early decoration.

**3** *Carols.* Advent Club members will not sing Christmas carols during Advent. We will encourage the singing of Advent carols like *O Come, O Come Emmanuel; On Jordan's Bank; Creator of the Stars of Night; Wake, Awake, the Night Is Dying; The Coming of Our God* and *Ye Heavens, Open from Above*. Advent's four weeks are hardly time enough to really appreciate these and the other wonderful hymns like them. They are delightful, instructive and too infrequently heard.

One parish singing group decided to use only Advent hymns during their annual pre-Christmas visit to the local hospital. The patients were enthusiastic, although surprised. During the 12 days of Christmas the group returned for the singing of Christmas carols.

The secular world now has finished with Christmas carols by December 26. The work of the Advent Club will not only help to restore the popularity of the Advent hymns but will enable the world to have a chance to really hear the Christmas carols, so many of which are now neglected.

**4** *Parties.* Advent Club members will encourage their parishes, schools and organizations to have Christmas parties during Christmastide, not during Advent. They will try to make it clear that Advent rec-

ollection can be destroyed by such parties. Since Advent is a season of joy, however, they will strive to bring about a restoration of some of the traditional Advent parties on St. Nicholas Day, the Sunday of Rejoicing, St. Lucy's Day, etc.

**5** *Magazines.* Catholic magazines could be a bulwark to the club. Most frequently their December issue comes out in late November or early December with a Christmastide theme — from the cover Nativity scene, to the articles, to the editorial deploring the abuses of Christmastime. Let them instead give over the December issue to Advent. Then the January issue could appropriately be dedicated to Christmas, coming out, as it does, during the 12 days.

**6** *Business People.* We of the Advent Club will ask storekeepers, managers of restaurants and public buildings and community decorating committees to put up their Christmas decorations as close to Christmastide as possible and to leave them up until January 6. One New York restaurant placed an Advent wreath in the main dining room after the suggestion was made. The electric company of a small town turned the street light decorations off a few days after December 25. One man phoned, explaining to them that Christmas lasts until January 6. They turned them on again and were happy to do so. Nobody had ever explained this to them before. This year they are planning to light a village Advent wreath on the main square.

When we see stores tearing down their decorations after the Christmas rush, it is easy enough to complain that these stores are commercializing Christmas. If only we will observe Advent and Christmastide fully ourselves and ask them to help us, we may be surprised at their willingness to co-operate.

**7** *Shopping, Cards and Gifts.* These fine customs are endorsed by the Advent Club. The members will not find them as exhausting to the pocketbook or person as others, nor will our Advent recollection be destroyed by them. We won't worry about the race to be finished by

December 24. What we don't get done by then we can do during the 12 Days. What is more we will have time during Advent for shopping because we won't be so busy trying to crowd Christmas parties into our schedule. Pioneer Advent Club members report that gifts received between December 26 and January 6 receive more attention from the recipients. They are delighted at this opportunity to extend Christmas and have more time to give attention to the opening of one gift than the multitude received on the 25th.

**8** *Reading.* Members of the Advent Club will read books and pamphlets like the Liturgical Press's *Family Advent Customs* and *Religious Customs in the Family*. Of course, they will use as their Advent family prayer and meditation books: the Sunday Masses of Advent, the Advent Psalms, the Book of Isaiah and the other prophecies of the advent of the Redeemer.

**9** *Special Advent Observances.* The Advent ember days; the use of the joyful mysteries of the Rosary; the feast of the Immaculate Conception; and the other Church, diocesan and parish observances at this time will gain meaning and depth when seen in their Advent surroundings.

**10** *Children and Adults.* Parent, priest and teacher members of the Advent Club will show children how to celebrate Advent. Youngsters respond to the challenge and joy of Advent if they are given the opportunity. Many grandparents and uncles and aunts will be valuable members, too, because they can recall for us and help us restore the Advent customs of their childhood in this or other lands.

These 10 suggestions are some of the ways members of the Advent Club will be able to help restore Christmas. They will lead us to a better observance not only of Christmastide but also Epiphanytide and the whole year in Christ.

Let the Advent Club start to plan and work immediately, for we will never have a truly Christian Christmas until Advent is kept properly. Let us keep Christ in Christmas by keeping Advent. ●

## The "O Antiphons" for Advent

On each of the seven days before Christmas there is an antiphon in the liturgy that the Church attributes to her. All of these antiphons begin with the exclamation "O" - and continue with the adapted words of the Old Testament that refer to the birth of Our Lord and His Redemption.

These antiphons, called the "Greater Antiphons" or the "O Antiphons" are the following:

### December 17:

O Wisdom, that proceedest from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly! Come and teach us the way of prudence.

### December 18:

O Adonai, and leader of the house of Israel, who appearest to Moses in the fire of the flaming bush, and gavest him the law on Sinai; come and redeem us by thy outstretched arm.

### December 19:

O Root of Jesse, who standest as the ensign of the people; before whom kings shall not open their lips; to whom the nations shall pray: come and deliver us; tarry now no more

### December 20:

O Key of David, and scepter of the house of Israel! Who openest, and no man shutteth: who shuttest, and no man openeth; come, and lead the captive from prison, sitting in the darkness and in the shadow of death.

### December 21:

O Orient! Splendor of eternal light, and Sun of justice! Come and enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

### December 22:

O King of nations, and their desired One, and the corner-stone that maketh both one; come and save man whom thou formedst out of slime.

### December 23:

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Expectation and Savior of the nations! Come and save us, O Lord our God!

### December 24:

O God, who makest us rejoice in the yearly expectation of the feast of our redemption: grant that we who joyfully receive thy only-begotten Son as a Redeemer, may behold, without fear, the same Lord Jesus Christ coming as our Judge. Who liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

### December 25:

O God, Who didst illumine this most holy night with the brightness of the True Light; grant, we beseech Thee, that we, who have known the mystery of His light on earth, may also attain to the full enjoyment of His joys in heaven. Who with Thee, liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

## The "O Antiphons" Suggest to Us Some Thoughts for Today!

When the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* of Pius XI against Communism was published in 1937, the Pontiff noted in it that the world was in such a bad state that it was in danger of falling to a state lower than it was before the Redemption. And indeed, we can say that it fell. From 1937 to this date, the catastrophe has happened. The many evils described by Pius XI have only increased since his time. The world redeemed by Jesus Christ is now at a lower state than before His coming.

In this situation we long for a restoration so radical that is similar to a redemption. We hope for a renewal of the fruits of Redemption applied to the needs of our times. We have need of the punishment of those who despise Our Lord and have infiltrated into the deepest recesses of His Church. If they could, they would destroy her. We also call for those who can convert to be regenerated and reconciled with Our Lord. We need the Reign of Mary to be implanted.

So, for us, in the days that precede Christmas, these antiphons should express an appeal and a plea to the Infant Jesus to hasten a stronger and more triumphant and invincible action to re-implant His Kingdom on earth - with Mary, in Mary and through Mary.

We should ask Our Lady to obtain this from her Son. We also should ask her to increase our hope that this will happen. In this way, we will pass this week in expectation of these graces as Our Lady was waiting for the graces of the Our Lord's coming before the feast of Christmas.

### SEVEN WAYS OF MAKING CHRISTMAS TRULY HAPPY

1. Send only Christmas cards with religious pictures or sentiments on them.
2. Have a Mass offered for yourself and family.
3. Receive the Infant Redeemer into your heart in Holy Communion .
4. Visit the sick on Christmas Day.
5. Perform some hidden deeds of almsgiving in honor of St. Nicholas.
6. Spend at least a half-hour in Prayer of Thanksgiving before the Crib each day during the Octave of the Nativity.
7. Make every day Christmas Day, by cultivating a deep love for Holy Mass.

Prayers and Readings From *The Imitation of Christ*  
for the Various Needs of Life

Bold numerals indicate **Book (I, II, III, IV)**  
and numerals indicate Chapter

Religious Life - **I**, 9,17,18,19,20,21,22,25

**II**, 1,4,7,8,9,11,12

**III**, 2,3,5,6,7,10,11,27,31,32,33,53,54,55,56

**IV**, 5,7,10,11,12,18

In Temptations - **I**, 13

**II**, 9

**III**, 6,12,14,16,17,18,19,20,21,23,29,30,  
35,37,47,48,49,50,52,55,57,59

In Tribulations - **I**, 12

**II**, 9,11,12

**III**, 6,12,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,23,29,30,  
35,37,41,47,48,49,50,52,55,56,59

In Dealing Discreetly with One's Neighbor - **I**, 4,7,14,16

**II**, 3

**III**, 13,15,16,17,18,19,24,36,44,45,46

The Four Last Things - **I**, 22,23,24

**II**, 14,48,49

Dryness in Serving God - **I**, 1,19,21,22,25

**III**, 3,8,9,14,21,40,44,48,52,55

**IV**, 3

Anxiety for Salvation - **I**, 25

**II**, 4

**III**, 3,7,21,48,49,54,56

**IV**, 8,9,15

Peace and Recollection - **I**, 6,10,20,21

**II**, 1,3

**III**, 1,2,3,11,23,25,26,27

Love of God - **II**, 7,8,10

**III**, 5,6,9,21,22,31,34,42

**IV**, 8,9

Before Holy Communion - **IV**, 6,7,9,10,11,13,14,15,16,17,18

After Holy Communion - **I**, 19,25

**II**, 1,12

**III**, 1,2,3,5,7,8,10,15,16,17,18,19,  
23,26,27,31,34,37,42,45,48,55

## Prepare Ye The Way of The Lord - SUGGESTED ADVENT SCRIPTURE READINGS

### First Week

Sunday	St. Luke	Chap. 21, verses 5-38;	Psalm 49
Monday	Genesis	Chap. 3 (especially verse 15);	Psalm 50
Tuesday	Genesis	Chap. 28 (especially verse 14);	Psalm 88
Wednesday	Genesis	Chap. 37 (Joseph a figure of Christ);	Psalm 21
Thursday	Genesis	Chap. 45;	Psalm 29
Friday	Genesis	Chap. 49 (especially verses 10-13 & 26);	Psalm 4
Saturday	Deuteronomy	Chap. 18 (especially verses 15-22);	Psalm 143

### Second Week

Sunday	St. Matthew	Chap. 11;	Psalm 71
Monday	Judith	Chap. 13 (Immaculate Conception);	Psalm 44 (especially verses 1-11)
Tuesday	St. Luke	Chap. 6, verses 20-26;	Psalm 88 (especially verses 20-31)
Wednesday	Isaiah	Chap. 7 (especially verses 14-16);	Psalm 26)
Thursday	I Kings	Chap. 2 (especially verses 1-10);	Psalm 133
Friday	Isaiah	Chap. 9 (especially verse 2 & 6-8);	Psalm 109
Saturday	Isaiah	Chap. 11 (especially verses 1-6 & 10);	Psalm 110

### Third Week

Sunday	St. John	Chap. 1, verses 1-28;	Psalm 84
Monday	Isaiah	Chap. 16 (especially verses 1 & 5);	Psalm 131
Tuesday	Isaiah	Chap. 30, verses 1-21 (esp. verses 20-21);	Psalm 142
Wednesday	Daniel	Chap. 9 (especially verses 24-27);	Psalm 90
Thursday	Isaiah	Chap. 32 (especially verse 1);	Psalm 79
Friday	Jeremias	Chap. 23 (especially verses 5-6);	Psalm 83
Saturday	Isaiah	Chap. 33 (especially verse 17);	Psalm 103

### Fourth Week

Sunday	St. John	Chap. 3, verses 1-18;	Psalm 72
Monday	Isaiah	Chap. 45 (especially verse 8);	Psalm 22
Tuesday	Joel	Chap. 5 (especially verses 2-5);	Psalm 13 (especially verses 6 & 17)
Wednesday	<i>(Christmas Eve)</i>	St. Matthew Chap. 1 (especially verses 18-25)	
Thursday	<i>(Christmas Day)</i>	St. Luke Chap. 2, verses 1-20	

### Martyrology for Christmas (to be read on Christmas Eve)

In the year five thousand, one hundred and ninety-nine from the creation of the world, when God in the beginning created heaven and earth;

In the year two thousand, nine hundred and fifty-seven from the flood;

In the year two thousand, and fifteen from the birthday of Abraham;

In the year one thousand, five hundred and ten from Moses and the going forth of the people of Israel from Egypt;

In the year one thousand, and thirty-two from the anointing of David as king;

In the sixty-fifth week according to the prophecy of Daniel;

In the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;

In the year seven hundred and fifty-two from the founding of the city of Rome;

In the forty-second year of the rule of Octavian Augustus;

In the sixth age of the world, when the whole world was at peace:

*Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father, being pleased to hallow the world by His most gracious coming, having been conceived of the Holy Ghost, and nine months having passed since His conception, having become Man, was born at Bethlehem in Juda of the Virgin Mary.*



## ADVENT PSALMS AND PRAYERS

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

And ransom captive Israel!

That mourns in lowly exile here,

Until the Son of God appear.

CHORUS:

Rejoice! Rejoice, O Israel!

To thee shall come Emmanuel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free

Thine own from Satan's tyranny;

From depths of hell Thy people save,

And give them victory o'er the grave.

CHORUS:

PREPARING FOR THE FEAST

OF HIS HOLY BIRTH

Hail and blessed be the hour and the moment in which the Son of God was born of the Most Pure Blessed Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold. In that hour, vouchsafe, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my petitions, through the merits of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

ADVENT PRAYER

O Infant Saviour, many times in life we have prepared for guests about to enter our beloved household. Some guests were important, but not nearly as important as the heavenly Visitor for Whom we now prepare our hearts.

The prophets of old longed for Thy coming into their world. We long for Thy return to our modern world. If "advent" means the coming of Christ, then there is nothing we need so badly today as an advent—another coming of Thyself and Thy principles into our pagan times. Only then will we breathe in a Christian atmosphere, an atmosphere in which joy replaces sorrow, peace replaces war and disturbance, and in which love casts out darkness.

O Mary, my mother, be my model this holy season. Christ was alive within thee during the first advent. We want Him to be more alive within us than ever during this, our advent. May we not merely possess our precious Catholic Faith; rather, may it take complete possession of us, so that wherever we go, whatever we do or say, it will be the Christ Child that inspires us.

We resolve to make our Christmas a holy day with Christ instead of a holiday without Him. We resolve to make our Christmas as the birthday of Christ, not merely as a day to give and receive merchandise; to help at least one poor family in honor of the Holy Family of Bethlehem. We promise to remember that the real symbols of Christmas are the star, the stable, and the crib, not Santa and his reindeer.

Finally, we promise every day to give glory to God in the highest and to work and pray for peace on earth among men of good will. Amen.

PSALMS FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Drop down dew from above, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the Just One;  
let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour. (Isa. XIV. 8.)

After each verse below, recite the following antiphon in unison:  
"Come, let us adore Our Lord and King Who is about to come to us!"

*First Week:*

1. Rejoice, O daughter of Sion, and be jubilantly glad, O daughter of Israel. Behold, thy Lord comes, and in His day a great light shall arise; the mountains shall drop down sweetness and the hills shall flow with milk and honey, for the Great Prophet shall come and He shall renew Jerusalem. (R. Brev.)

2. Behold, thy God comes, the Man of the House of David, to sit upon the throne; and you shall see and your heart shall rejoice. (R. Brev.)

*Second Week:*

3. Behold, the Lord, our Protector, comes, the Holy One of Israel, having on His head the regal crown; and He shall rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. (Apoc. xiv. 14; Ps. lxxi. 8.)

4. Behold, the Lord comes, and He will not lie; should He tarry, await Him, for He shall assuredly come and shall not delay. (R. Brev.)

*Third Week:*

5. The Lord shall come down as rain upon the fleece, and in His days shall justice spring up and abundance of peace; and all kings of the earth shall adore Him, all nations serve Him. (Ps. lxxi. 6, 7, 11.)

6. A Child is born to us, and He shall be called the Mighty God; He shall sit upon the throne of David, His father, and shall rule; for the government is upon His shoulders. (Isa. ix. 6.)

*Fourth Week:*

7. Bethlehem, city of the most high God, out of thee shall go forth the Ruler of Israel, and His proceeding is from the beginning, even from the days of eternity; and He shall be exalted in the midst of the whole earth, and peace shall hold sway in the day of His coming. (Mich. v. 2.)

8. Our forerunner Jesus, the Lamb undefiled, has entered the Holy of Holies for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech... He is the King of Justice... having neither beginning of days nor end of life. (Heb. vi. 20.)

\* \* \*

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## The Annunciation - Meditations for the First Joyful Mystery

(taken from the *Mystical City of God* - Book II - The Incarnation)

**Our Father:** At the bidding of the divine will, the holy Gabriel presents himself at the throne of the Most High and His Majesty then expressly charges him with the message, which he was to bring the most holy Mary and instructs him in the very words with which he was to salute and address her. Thus the first Author of the message was God Himself, Who formed the exact words in His divine mind, and revealed them to the holy archangel for transmission to the most pure Mary. #111

### Hail Mary:

1. "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women."  
Who having heard [in her humility] was troubled at his saying... #132
2. "Fear not Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.  
Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son and thou shalt call His name Jesus.  
He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High: #132
3. and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father;  
and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." #132
4. "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" At the same time She interiorly represented to the Lord the vow of chastity, which she had made at her espousal, which His Majesty had celebrated with her. #133
5. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee.  
And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." #134
6. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." #137
7. By the intensity of these movements and supernal affections, her most pure heart, was contracted and compressed with such force, that it distilled three drops of her most pure blood, #137
8. and these, finding their way to the natural place for the act of conception, were formed by the power of the divine and Holy Spirit, into the body of Christ our Lord. #137
9. At her "Fiat" - four things happened: #138
  1. The most holy body of Christ our Lord was formed;
  2. The most holy soul of our Lord was created;
10.
  3. The soul and body united in order to compose the perfect humanity;
  4. The Divinity united Itself with the humanity, and thus was formed Christ, true God and true Man.



ADVENT PRAYERS TO PREPARE  
A CRIB IN YOUR HEART FOR THE CHRISTCHILD



**WEEK:**

1. My Infant Redeemer, soon we shall celebrate Thy Birthday. Thou hast tried to win our love for a long, long time. But instead of winning our love, Thou lost out because we loved sin too much. Sin is the one thing I can claim as my very own. And I have so many sins. I did not learn very well what the Holy men and Prophets kept telling us people in the world that we should love and serve Thee. Instead I loved sin more.

Thou hast had to become man in order to make Thyself loved by me. Proud sinner that I am, I should now be ashamed to come before Thee. My pride blinded me and I did not see that the many blessings I have come from Thee. My pride often brings me to think of revenge the minute anybody hurts my feelings. Because of my many sins I have truly deserved to be thrown into hell.

My Infant Jesus, do not drive me from Thy presence as I deserve. Thou hast said that Thou could not help loving a heart that is sorry and that truly humbles itself: now I am sorry for all my sins committed against Thee. Forgive me, My Infant Jesus; for I will not offend Thee anymore. I want my soul clean and pure for Thy Birthday. Thou hast to suffer so many hurts for my sake; so for Thy sake I will bear with all the hurts that may be offered me and so pay my just debts. Give me Thy help, that I may always love Thee. I want to bear every insult for love of Thee. Mary, with Thine arms around me, show me to Thy Son. Mother Mary, ask Him to bless me. Amen.

2. My Infant Redeemer, I should not be so bold as to kneel before Thy feet. I do so only because Thou has invited me. I am the one who has hurt Thee so much by my many sins. But Thou hast come into the world to forgive sinners who are really sorry for their sins. Please forgive me. I know how wrong I have been. From the bottom of my heart I am truly sorry. When I think how good Thou wert and how much Thou hast loved me, I know how wrong I have been.

Thou givest great graces and blessings to so many people during these wonderful days right before Thy Birthday. Please, My Infant Jesus, the grace I want most especially is the grace from today on to love Thee with my whole heart. Please hear my prayer. First forgive me my many sins; second, teach me how to love Thee; third, let me truly love Thee always, so that I may never sin again. My Mother Mary, thou can get me all these things by thy prayers; I ask thee only this: pray to Jesus for me. Amen.

3. My Infant Redeemer, who am I that Thou should have loved me, and now still continue to love me so much? What hast Thou ever received from me that hast obliged Thee to love me? The insults, slights, and sins which I have given Thee would be reason enough for Thee to forget about me and put me forever from Thy face. I have often turned my back on Thee for the sake of the pleasure of the world. By these sinful pleasures I have given up Thy grace and Thy love.

Pardon me, my Jesus, for I am so sorry with my whole heart for every single sin and hurt I have given Thee. But it will not be enough to be forgiven. I want also the grace to love Thee with a strong everlasting love. May this Thy Birthday, be the best ever. I want everybody to have Thee in their hearts. That will make this the best Birthday Thou hast ever had. Mary, you are His Mother, please help us to love Him. Amen.

4. All Hail! Most lovely, most Holy, most amiable, and loving Infant Jesus, King of my soul. Ah! Blessed be the hour in which Thy Holy Mother will give Thee to me as a ransom. O, most beautiful above the children of men! Give me grace to prepare to receive Thee worthily on the glorious Feast of Thy Nativity. Give me a heart all glowing with holy desires, love, gratitude, and ardent zeal to correspond with the designs which bring Thee on earth. Give me the true spirit of Thy Holy Nativity, a spirit of humility, silence, detachment, docility, meekness, and true and ardent charity. Give me grace daily to advance in devotions to Thy Blessed Infancy, and faithfully to persevere in the discharge of all my duties in spite of the allurements of Satan, or the scoffing of the world. Amen.

# CATHOLIC ADVENT and CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS and PRAYERS

## THE ADVENT WREATH:

One of the most popular of traditional Advent customs is the Advent wreath. It is made of evergreens tied to a wire circle. The evergreen represents eternal life. The circle represents the cycle of years from Adam to Christ. Four candles, one for each week, represent the 4,000 years of waiting for the Messiah to come. Three purple candles and one pink are needed. Placed on the dinner table, the Advent wreath is especially popular in the home, where the children, as well as parents, take turns at lighting the candles.



THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: after the family has gathered for the blessing of the wreath, the father begins:

Father: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made both heaven and earth.

Father: O God, by Whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth Thy blessings upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, and may receive from Thee abundant graces, through Christ Our Lord.

All: Amen. (Father sprinkles the wreath with holy water.)

THE FIRST WEEK: (Sunday through Saturday)

Father: Stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, O Lord, and come, so that we may escape through Thy protection and be saved by Thy help from the dangers that threaten us because of our sins, Who livest and reignest forever and ever.

All: Amen. (One purple candle is lit by the youngest child and left burning during the meal.)

THE SECOND WEEK: (Sunday through Saturday)

Father: O Lord, stir up our hearts that we may prepare for Thy only begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with pure minds, through Christ Our Lord.

All: Amen. (The first and second purple candles are lit by the eldest child and left burning during the meal.)

THE THIRD WEEK: (Sunday through Saturday)

Father: O Lord, we beg Thee, incline Thine ear to our prayers and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation, through Christ Our Lord.

All: Amen. (The 2 purple and pink candles are lit by the mother and allowed to burn as before.)

THE FOURTH WEEK: (Sunday through Christmas Eve)

Father: O Lord, stir up Thy power, we pray Thee, and come; and with Thy great might help us, that with the help of Thy grace, Thy merciful forgiveness may hasten what our sins impede, through Christ Our Lord.

All: Amen. (All four candles are lit by the father and allowed to burn as before.)

For Christmas Day, the candles can be replaced with new white candles and lit to signify the birth of the Light of the World, Christ Our Lord!

**THE BLESSING of the CHRISTMAS TREE:** spread throughout Europe from its beginning in Germany, the Christmas tree is one of the family's true delights.

**FATHER:** Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

**ALL:** Who made both heaven and earth.

**READER 1:** Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for He is come.

(Psalm 95) Sing unto the Lord a new song: sing to the Lord all the earth.

Sing unto the Lord, bless His Name: proclaim His salvation from day to day.

Declare His glory among the Gentiles: His marvelous works among all the people.

For great is the Lord and highly to be praised: He is to be feared above all the gods.

Honor and majesty are before Him: Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

Give to the Lord, ye kindred of the people; give to the Lord glory and strength: Give to the Lord the glory due unto His Name.

**READER 2:** Offer sacrifice and come into His courts: Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Tremble before Him, all the earth: Say among the heathen, "The Lord reigneth."

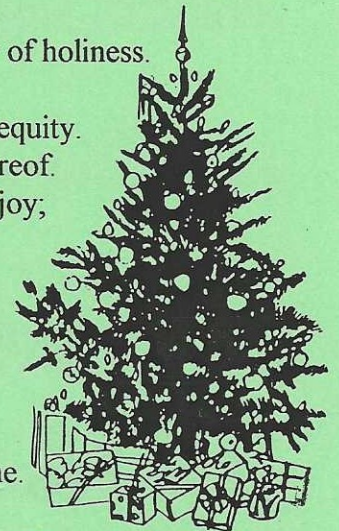
The world also is established that it cannot be moved: He will judge the people with equity.

Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice: Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof.

Let the field exult and all that is therein: Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy;

Before the Lord, for He is come: For He is come to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness: And the people in His truth.



**FATHER:** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

**ALL:** As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

**FATHER:** Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for He is come.

**MOTHER:** (Ezekiel 17:22-24) Thus saith the Lord God: I Myself will take the top of the high cedar and will set it. I will crop a tender twig from the top of the branches thereof, and I will plant it on a mountain high and eminent. On the high mountains of Isreal, will I plant it and it shall bear fruit, and it shall become a great cedar: and all the birds shall dwell under it, and every fowl shall make its nest under the shadow of the branches thereof. And all the trees of the country shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree, and exalted the low tree: and have dried up the green tree, and have caused the dried tree to flourish. I the Lord have spoken and have done it.

**ALL:** Thanks be to God.

**FATHER:** And there shall come forth a shoot.

**ALL:** Out of the root of Jesse.

**FATHER:** In Him was life.

**ALL:** And the life was the light of men.

**FATHER:** O Lord, hear my prayer.

**ALL:** And let my cry come unto Thee.

**FATHER:** The Lord be with you.

**ALL:** And with thy Spirit.

**FATHER:** Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, Who hast caused Thy Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, to be planted like a tree of life in Thy Church by being born of the most holy Virgin Mary, bless, we beseech Thee, this tree that all who see it may be filled with a holy desire to be grafted as living branches into the same Lord, Jesus Christ, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

(Father sprinkles tree with holy water)

## Prayer to the Infant Jesus in the Manger

Come to me, O Divine Savior! vouchsafe to be born in my heart; grant that, taught by Thine example and assisted by Thy grace, I may be poor in spirit and humble of heart. Keep me chaste and obedient. I wish to live but for Thee and to do all things purely for love of Thee.

O my Jesus, my supreme and true Good! what can have attracted Thee from heaven to be born in a cave if it be not the love that Thou bearest to man? What has drawn Thee from the bosom of Thy Father to lay Thyself down in a manger? What has brought Thee down from Thy throne above the stars to stretch Thyself on a little straw? What, from the midst of the nine choirs of angels has placed Thee between two animals? Thou dost inflame the seraphim with holy fire, and lo, Thou art trembling with cold in this stable! Thou dost give motion to the heavens and the sun, and now Thou cannot move without being carried in someone's arms! Thou dost provide both man and beast with food, and dost Thou now require a little milk to sustain Thy life! Thou art the delight of heaven, and yet I hear Thee weep and moan? Tell me who hath reduced Thee to such misery? "Who hath done this? "Love hath done it," says St. Bernard; the love that Thou bearest to man hath done it.

O dearest Infant! Tell me what Thou came on earth to do? Tell me whom Thou are seeking? Ah, I understand Thee now; Thou art come in order to die for me, to deliver me from an unhappy eternity. Thou art come to seek me, a lost sheep, in order that I may no more fly from Thee, but love Thee.

Ah, my Jesus, my treasure, my life, my love, my all; if I do not love Thee, whom shall I love? Where can I find a father, a friend, a spouse more worthy of love than Thou, and who has loved me more than Thou hast done? I am sorry because I did not love Thee and serve Thee more fervently. Forgive me, O my beloved Redeemer; for I repent of having treated Thee with ingratitude. I am sorry for it with all my heart. Pardon me, and give me Thy grace, that I may love Thee constantly during the years that remain to me in this life. My Love, I give myself entirely to Thee. Dispose of all that I am and of all that I have according to Thy will. May Thy holy will be done in me and through me.

O Mary, thou art my advocate. Thou dost obtain by thy prayers whatever thou wilt from thy Son; beg of Him to forgive me my offences and to grant me holy perseverance unto death.

St. Joseph, do thou also pray for me that I may become daily more pleasing to Jesus.

## *Prayers to be Recited When Visiting a Christmas Crib*

**I**n the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

(Recite 1 Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be)

V. And the Word was made flesh

R. And dwelt among us.

**O** Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ, prostrate before Thy crib, I believe that Thou art the God of infinite majesty, even though I see Thee as a helpless babe. Humbly I adore and thank Thee for having so humbled Thyself for my salvation as to will to be born in a stable. I thank Thee for all Thou didst wish to suffer for me in Bethlehem, for Thy poverty and humility, for Thy nakedness, tears, cold, and sufferings.

**W**ould that I could show Thee that tenderness which Thy Virgin Mother had toward Thee, and love Thee as she loved Thee. Would that I could praise Thee with the joy of the angels; that I could kneel before Thee with the faith of Saint Joseph; the simplicity of the shepherds. Uniting myself with these first worshiper at the crib, I offer Thee the homage of my heart and I beg that Thou wouldst be born spiritually in my soul. Give me, I pray Thee, the virtues of Thy blessed Nativity. Fill me with that spirit of renunciation, of poverty, of humility, which prompted Thee to assume the weakness of our nature, and to be born amid destitution and suffering. Grant that from this day forward I may in all things seek Thy greater glory, and may enjoy that peace promised to men of good will. Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

### *Prayer to the Holy Infant Jesus in the Crib*

**All Hail!** *Most lovely, Most Holy, most amiable, and loving Infant Jesus, King of my soul. Ah! Blessed by the hour in which Thy Holy Mother will give Thee to me as my ransom. O, most beautiful above the children of men! Give me grace to prepare to receive Thee worthily on the glorious Feast of Thy Nativity. Give me a heart all glowing with Holy desires, love, gratitude, and ardent zeal to correspond with the designs which bring Thee on earth. Give me the true spirit of Thy Holy Nativity, a spirit of humility, silence, detachment, docility, meekness, and true and ardent charity. Give me grace daily to advance in devotions to Thy Blessed Infancy, and faithfully to persevere in the discharge of all my duties in spite of the allurements of Satan, or the scoffing of the world.*

### **PRAYER TO THE INFANT JESUS**

**C**ome to me, O Divine Savior, vouchsafe to be born in my heart. Grant that, taught by Thine example, and assisted by Thy grace, I may be poor in spirit and humble of heart. Keep me chaste and obedient. I wish to live but for Thee, and to do all things purely for love of Thee. O Mary, my Advocate and Mother, obtain by thy prayers forgiveness of my past offences and holy perseverance unto death. St. Joseph, do thou also pray for me, that I may become daily more pleasing to Jesus. Amen.

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