



## IDEAS TO CELEBRATE ADVENT WITH YOUR FAMILY

**ADVENT WREATH** - Advent wreaths were originally part of folk traditions of Northern Europe. Wreaths of evergreens were decorated with candles to symbolize life and light during the dark months of winter. Legend has it that Saint Boniface first gave the wreath its Christian meaning in the eighth century, and we have been using these wreaths as part of our Advent preparation ever since. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God. The evergreens signify continuous life. Each of the four candles represents one of the Sundays of Advent. The purple candles represent the prayer, penance, preparation, and good works we are called to do during Advent. The color purple signifies the “royalty” of Jesus Christ. The pink candle is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent, which is the Sunday of rejoicing. The light of the candles reminds us that Jesus comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. We gradually add more light each Sunday until Christ, our Light, comes at Christmas.

To download free prayers for your Advent Wreath, visit  
[http://www.loyolapress.com/assets/fg\\_comp/pdf\\_135605.pdf](http://www.loyolapress.com/assets/fg_comp/pdf_135605.pdf)

**JESSE TREE** - A Jesse Tree is an advent project. Each day you color an ornament that represents a bit of the lineage of Christ. The tree begins with creation and stretches through the Old and New Testaments until we reach the wonderful story of the birth of Jesus. The tree gets its name from Jesse, the father of David. The first day’s scripture is Isaiah 11:1-2 - “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.” This branch came in the form of a babe, and through the scriptures for each ornament, you can see God weaving the stories into place to ready the world for the coming Messiah.

Here is a free Jesse Tree with printable ornaments that you can download.  
<http://printables.yourway.net/christmas/jesse-tree-ornaments/>

**NATIVITY SET** — Our Nativity sets should be just as visible to our children as our Christmas Tree. There are thousands of options for Nativity sets, from beautiful and expensive, to free. There are play versions from Fisher Price that are made of plastic and made to be used by small children. If you don’t have a Nativity set, or if you would like a Nativity set activity for your family, here is a free one that you print, color and assemble, using white cardstock.

<http://catholicicing.com/diy-printable-nativity-for-kids/>

ADVENT ADVENTURE ONLINE — This is from HolyHeroes.com. You sign up via email and they send you daily activities or ideas to celebrate with your family. There are videos, coloring pages, and other activities. You don't have to do all of the activities, just pick the ones you like.

<http://www.holyheroes.com/Holy-Heroes-Advent-Adventure-s/48.htm>

PRAYER COMPANIONS — One way that we can keep our family focused on the real meaning of the Christmas season is to spend more of our own time with God. Daily meditations are a great way to focus your thoughts on Christ amidst the craziness of the season. Each of these devotion guides contains a short (under five minutes) meditation and prayer for every day of Advent.

Magnificat Advent Companion

[http://www.magnificat.com/english/boutique\\_advent.asp](http://www.magnificat.com/english/boutique_advent.asp)

LifeTeen advent Companion

<http://store.lifeteen.com/advent-companion.aspx>

READ SCRIPTURE — Maybe you already have a favorite Bible that you use with your children, but if not, check out this one. It does a great job of connecting every story to the birth of Jesus and it emphasizes for children the beauty of God's love for us.

*The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd Jones (Available on Amazon)

If your children are older, this a great Bible for teens and young adults, with topical indexes, answers to common Catholic questions and many other great resources

*The Catholic Teen Bible* by LifeTeen (available on Amazon)