



"Teach us to number our days aright,/that we may gain wisdom of heart" (Psalm 90:12). Numbering our days, marking time, is essential to being human. We order our lives by the calendar and by the clock; we celebrate anniversaries and birthdays; we make rituals of the changing of the seasons and celebrate the new year. Within the life of the Church, knowing what time it is enables us to live more fully our Christian calling as we pattern our lives on the Paschal Mystery of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. What we begin in Advent will serve us well throughout the entire year as we listen to the scriptures and pattern our own lives after the life and teachings of Jesus. Advent is a period of anticipation – the beginning of the new liturgical year. You are

invited to see these four weeks as an opportunity to begin a new year of grace, a year in which we deepen our participation in Christ's life and teachings as a template for our own. Preparing for Jesus' birth is a first step. During Advent we are preparing to experience the Divine Light in our lives. We receive glimpses of it in the liturgy as we listen to the readings and meditate on the one for whom we wait. We commit ourselves to embracing and embodying the Light, which not even the darkness can overcome. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once compared Advent to a prison cell "in which one waits and hopes and does various unessential things... but is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside."

Holy Father's Intentions for December

Each month, the Holy Father asks us to pray with him by remembering his intentions in our prayers.

General Intention: That all peoples may grow in harmony and peace through mutual understanding and respect.

Mission Intention: That children and young people may be messengers of the Gospel and that they may be respected and preserved from all violence and exploitation.

The Great "O" Antiphons

Beginning on December 17, until Christmas, we pray the great "O" Antiphons. These prayers to Christ, each addressing the Lord under a different title, and each beginning with the word "O," are the perfect way to prepare for Christmas. The "O" Antiphons are set to music in the familiar Advent hymn "*O come, O come Emmanuel*".

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Each evening, light the appropriate candle on the Advent wreath. As you light the candle, you might pray in these words from the Book of Blessings -

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath.

May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.

May he come quickly, and not delay.

An Advent Meal Prayer for families

Lord,
as we begin to get ready for Christmas,
help us to be grateful for all your gifts,
especially the gift of this meal
we share together. Amen.
Come, Lord Jesus, bless this food.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

From Let's Say Grace by Robert M. Hamma

A Prayer to Saint Nicholas

On December 6, we celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, patron saint of children.

O good Saint Nicholas,
you bring joy to children:
teach me to spread happiness around me.

Your feast prepares us for Christmas:
increase my faith in Jesus,
who is Emmanuel, God-with-us.

You were bishop and pastor:
help me to find my place in the Church.

O good Saint Nicholas,
watch over me always,
and all those

whom I entrust to you today. Amen.

From a French prayer to St. Nicholas

The Immaculate Conception

During Advent, as we prepare for the birth of Christ, we also celebrate one of the great feasts of the Catholic Church. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) is not only a celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary but a foretaste of our own redemption. It is such an important feast that the Church has declared the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception a Holy Day of Obligation. In keeping the Blessed Virgin free from the stain of sin from the moment of her conception, God presents us with a glorious example of what mankind was meant to be. Mary is truly the second Eve, because, like Eve, she entered the world without sin. Unlike Eve, she remained sinless throughout her life--a life that she dedicated fully to the will of God. The Eastern Fathers of the Church referred to her as "without stain"; in Latin, that phrase is *immaculatus*: "immaculate." Masses for the Holy Day are at 8:10am with Cathedral School, 12:10pm, 5:30pm, and 7:30pm in Spanish.

Aspiration to Mary

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.