

What do you know about Advent?

By Fr Moe

Since before Thanksgiving, all the retailers seem to be decorated for Christmas. It is therefore not surprising that our sense of Advent would be obscured by a premature celebration of Christmas. Perhaps a brief review of *Advent History* may give us some insight into its importance as a season and inspire us to live Advent before we celebrate Christmas.

The word Advent is rooted in the Latin, *adventus*, meaning “coming.” It has its origin in the Spanish and Gallican Council of Saragossa in the year 380 where the laity was reminded of their obligation to attend church daily from December 17th through January 6th. In 5th century Gaul (present day France) a three-day-week fast began on St. Martin’s Day (Nov. 11) to Christmas and a synod at Tours, France, 567, also prescribed a fast for monks in the weeks before Christmas.

But the root of what we celebrate today came from Rome at the time of Saint Gregory the Great, 604. He promulgated a fixed season of four weeks. He added seasonal prayers and antiphons to the Mass, Lectionary and the Liturgy of the Hours. This Roman liturgical practice was brought to Gaul in the 9th century where the French colored Advent with eschatological (*the end of time and the 2nd coming of Christ*) themes and the calling to penance, fasting, confession, and a return to the sacraments for those who had strayed from the faith. By the 12th century, Advent had evolved into the basis of our present day celebration.



As we see the development of Advent through the tradition and history of our Church we ourselves may feel called to bring this tradition to life in our own lives. Indeed, attending a daily Mass during the week, fasting one day a week, making an effort to pray and read Scripture daily, going to confession at least once during the season; these are all marvelous considerations for nurturing the life of Jesus during this season that prepares us for Christmas.

“In the Liturgy of Advent, the Church makes present the ancient expectancy of the Messiah” (Catholic Catechism, #524). One could say that while Mary prepared for Jesus’ coming in the 9 months of her pregnancy, the 4 weeks of Advent is our invitation to prepare for the continuous entrance Christ in our own lives.