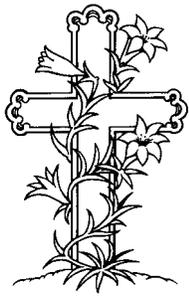


Advent and Christmas



Do you know which is the most important Church feast day of the year? Many people will answer, “Christmas!”

Of course, Christmas is important but it’s not the most important! Easter is. In fact, *The Catechism of the Catholic*

Church calls Easter the “Feast of feasts!” (paragraph 1169)

However, important as it is, the Church year does not begin with Easter. It does not begin with New Year’s Day, either! January 1 simply begins the calendar year.

The Church divides the year into special seasons to mark and remember the different events in the life of Jesus and Mary. We call this Church year the liturgical year.



We call the first season of the liturgical year Advent, and the first day of the liturgical year is the first Sunday of Advent. You will need to check a calendar to learn the date of the next first Sunday of Advent. It is always a Sunday, and it falls in late November or early December. You probably remember there are four Sundays in Advent, the Sundays right before Christmas. During Advent, be sure to notice the colors, decorations, and hymns used at your parish. Pay attention to the Scripture stories that are being told or read to you.

Advent is a season of hope and waiting. We remember the people of the Old Testament who had to wait for so long

for God to send a Savior. They never lost hope. At Mass during Advent, we hear Scripture stories of their long wait for the Savior.

Advent is a season of darkness, too. We remember the people who had to live without the Light of Christ. We remember that our sins made it necessary for Jesus to come and save us. The colors of Advent are violet and dark blue. You won’t see Christmas decorations in our churches during Advent. We are waiting for Christmas. It is not here yet!

During Advent, we pray about the coming of Christ in our own lives. We are not waiting for a baby to be born. Jesus was already born centuries ago. It is nice to remember, but now we wait for the Risen Jesus to come in glory to take us to heaven. People are often surprised to learn that just as there are four Sundays of Advent, there are four Sundays of Christmas! It might look as though Christmas begins and ends on December 25th, but the Church celebrates Christmas for two weeks.

During the Christmas season, you see Christmas decorations in Church. We sing Christmas carols. The colors of vestments and altar cloths are colors of joy—white and gold!

The Scripture stories of the Christmas season begin with the story of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem and include other stories of Jesus’ early years.

