

# Editorial: Don't let your Advent habits fall away come Christmas

Advent is a time of the liturgical year when Catholics often try to put their best spiritual foot forward. We add on extra devotions to our prayer routine, or simply make an effort to commit to a basic prayer routine in the first place. We light our Advent wreaths and pray together as a family at dinnertime, or we engage in other seasonal traditions to help us prepare for the coming of Christ.

But when the Advent season is over and the Christmas rejoicing begins, our well-honed prayer efforts too often go up in smoke along with the remnants of our Advent candles. Instead of letting that happen, here are five ways that can help keep your prayer life robust this Christmas season.

**1. Celebrate the Christmas octave in its fullness.** For the secular world, Christmas ends at 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 25. But we in the Church are just getting started. Not only do we have the entire season of Christmas ahead of us (through the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, this year on Jan. 9, or, for some, the Presentation of the Lord on Feb. 2!), we have eight whole days of Christmas in a row. From the Nativity of the Lord on Dec. 25 through the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God on Jan. 1, the Church celebrates Christmas Day over and over again during the Christmas octave. These are wonderful days to attend daily Mass, sing the Gloria and give thanks to God for the gift of his son. You could also reserve some gifts from under the tree and give loved ones a small item for each day of the octave – being sure to pray for those individuals every day, too.

**2. Transition your Advent wreath to a Christmas wreath.**

With the arrival of Christmas, substitute four white candles for the purple and pink candles on your Advent wreath. As you would with your Advent wreath, continue to light your Christmas wreath during dinner or during prayer time to help encourage you to continue your prayer routine throughout the Christmas season.



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**3. Keep your Nativity scene up until Feb. 2.** Keeping the Nativity scene as a focal point in your home is a wonderful way to continue prayer and contemplation on the birth of Christ throughout the Christmas season. “Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition,” Pope Francis wrote in his 2019 apostolic letter *Admirabile Signum*. Prayer in front of the Nativity scene is a lovely way to reflect upon the Incarnation and the humble beginnings

**4. Pick a spiritual book to read for the Christmas season.** During Advent, a popular practice is to select and read a spiritual book as a way to help further one’s prayer life. Why not make a similar commitment for the Christmas season? If you prayed with your spouse, family or a small group during Advent, you could continue this practice until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord – or even throughout all of January! [osvcatholicbookstore.com](http://osvcatholicbookstore.com) has a wonderful

selection of titles that can keep your faith active and growing.

**5. Celebrate the saints.** Advent provides us with numerous saints to read about, connect with and pray to, and so does Christmas. During the Christmas octave alone, the Church celebrates the feasts of St. Stephen, St. John the Apostle, St. Thomas Becket, the Holy Innocents and the Holy Family. "Each of these celebrations points us in its own distinctive way to the Nativity of Our Lord, helping us to ponder the implications of the Word made flesh who came to dwell among us," writes D.D. Emmons at [SimplyCatholic.com](http://SimplyCatholic.com). The octave culminates with a solemnity celebrating Mary as the Mother of God and an opportunity to reflect upon Mary's role in our salvation.

Advent provides us with a valuable time to grow in faith – four prayerful weeks to prepare for the coming of Christ. But our efforts should not end with the Nativity of Our Lord. May your Christmas season be rich in holiness as we celebrate our Savior's birth.

*Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert, Scott Warden, York Young*