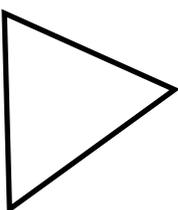
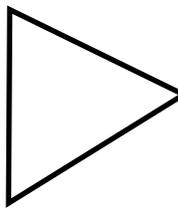


# 2023 Advent Practices



## 4 Weeks of Advent

 **Week 1:**  During the first 2-3 weeks, through Dec 16, the Liturgy focuses on us preparing more room in our hearts for Christ and preparing for his 2nd Coming.

 **Week 2:**  Starting Dec 17, we focus on Christ's 1st Coming--his birth

 **Week 3:**

 **Week 4:**

**Old Testament Readings:** The Prophecies foretelling Christ's 1st Coming.

**New Testament Readings:** John the Baptist prepares the way; The Angel Gabriel's Annunciation to Mary.



## Advent Wreath

This tradition might have originally been adapted from an ancient practice during the winter of lighting candles around a wreath and praying for the return of light. For the Church, this tradition goes back possibly to the 16th Century. The circular wreath symbolizes God's infinite love, and the evergreen branches, the hope of everlasting life that Jesus brings. We light a candle for each week of Advent. Since on the 3rd Sunday we are closer to Christ's coming, we call it Gaudete (which means rejoice) Sunday and we light a rose colored candle. Sometimes a White Candle is placed in the center and lit at Christmas.



## Jesse Tree

This tradition started back in the Middle Ages. The Jesse Tree uses symbols to tell the story of the Bible from the Creation of the world to the Birth of Jesus. At first, these trees were carvings, tapestries or stained glass windows in Churches that were used to help people that couldn't read to understand the Stories in the Bible. Today, Jesse Trees serve as another form of an advent Calendar. There is a symbol each day of Advent for various key stories and figures from the Bible leading up to the Birth of Jesus. One could hang symbols on a real tree and then when Christmas arrives the symbols can be replaced with Christmas decorations and lights.



# 2023 Advent Practices

## → Las Posadas

This tradition is celebrated primarily in Latin America, Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba, Spain, and by Hispanics in the United States. It lasts for 9 days (like a Novena) from December 16-24. It is inspired by the birth of Jesus when there was no room for him in the “Inn.” Posada means “inn” in Spanish and the 9 days represent the 9 months of Mary’s pregnancy. Two people are chosen to play the parts of Joseph and Mary and particular houses are selected to be “inns.” A person carrying a candle inside a paper shade leads a procession with Joseph, Mary and many others. While processing, musicians lead the group in singing posadas. Sometimes the Holy Couple rides a real donkey and others join in as angels and shepherds. Pilgrims may carry images of the holy people instead. Each night they travel to a house where the residents respond by singing a song and welcoming the group of pilgrims inside. Then the group kneels down before the Nativity scene to pray (usually the Rosary). The evening concludes with Christmas Carols and children breaking open star-shaped, ceramic pinatas. Then everyone sits down for a feast. On the last night, it might conclude in a Church.



## → Advent Wreath Blessing

All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:

**Our help is in the name of the Lord.**

Response (R/.) **Who made heaven and earth.**

Then the Scripture, Isaiah 9 (lines 1-2 and 5-6) or Isaiah 63 (lines 16-17 & 19) or Isaiah 64 (lines 2-7) is read:

Reader: **The Word of the Lord.**

R/. **Thanks be to God.**

With hands joined, the leader says:

Lord our God,  
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:  
he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,  
he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,  
he is the Savior of every nation.  
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.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R/. Amen.

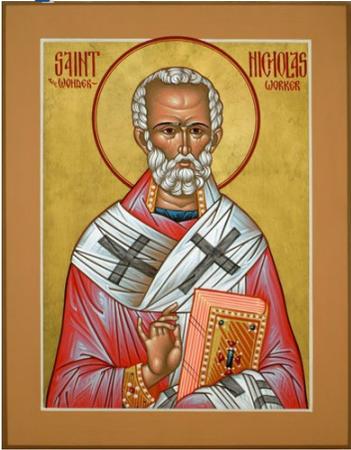
The blessing may conclude with a verse from  
“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”:

O come, desire of nations, bind  
in one the hearts of humankind;  
bid ev’ry sad division cease  
and be thyself our Prince of peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Online Advent Resources for the Family:

<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/advent>

# Special Cultural Saint Celebrations for Advent



## ST. NICHOLAS: December 6:

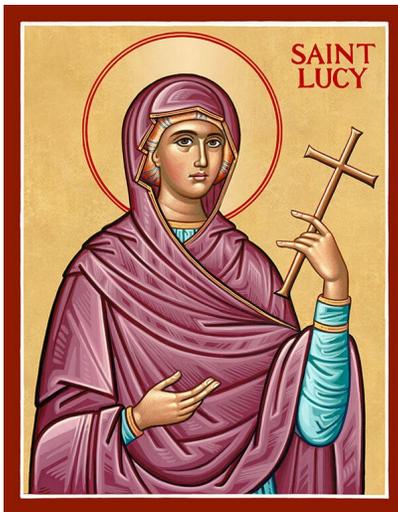
### WHO IS HE?:

“Santa Claus” comes from the Dutch form of his name, “SINTERKLAAS.” St. Nicholas was of Greek descent and was a fourth century bishop in Turkey in a city now called Demre. He became well known for his secret gift-giving. He is also considered the patron saint of sailors, fishermen, brides, children and the precursor to Santa Claus.

### HOW TO CELEBRATE THIS FEAST DAY:

To celebrate St. Nicholas and his giving nature, children are invited to place their shoes outside their bedrooms on the evening of Dec 5. When they awake the next day, their shoes have been filled with surprises, like coins.

St. Nicholas was known for putting coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him. In medieval times nuns used the night of 6 December to deposit baskets of food and clothes anonymously at the doorsteps of the needy. Another tradition that developed was that on 6 December every sailor or ex-sailor would go to the harbor towns for a church celebration for their patron saint. On the way home they would shop at one of the *Nicholas fairs* to buy various goods, gifts for their loved ones and little presents for their children. The larger gifts were saved for Christmas, while the little presents were given right away to the children, courtesy of Saint Nicholas.



## SAINT LUCY: December 13:

### WHO IS SHE?:

The name Lucy means light. A disappointed suitor accused 20 year old Lucy of being a Christian and she was martyred in the Diocletian Persecution in the year 304 AD. She is the patron saint of the blind because her eyes were gouged out before being martyred.

### HOW TO CELEBRATE THIS FEAST DAY:

Before the change in the calendar in 1582, her feast day coincided with the Winter Solstice—the day with the least amount of light. Thus, the feast became a celebration of light—especially in Scandinavian countries with their long, dark winters. There, a young girl dressed in a white dress and a red sash (as the symbol of martyrdom) carries palms and wears a crown or wreath of candles on her head. Another tradition is that girls dressed as Lucy carry rolls and cookies in procession as songs are sung. It is said that to vividly celebrate St. Lucy's Day will help one live the long winter days with enough light. In Italy, they celebrate with home made pasta and a dessert made with large grains of soft wheat (representing Lucy's eyes) placed in hot chocolate. In small towns, a parade with Saint Lucy is held the evening of the 12th when she goes through the main streets of the town munching sweets and candy from her cart, always together with her donkey.

## ST. LUCIA BUNS:

These saffron-hued sweet buns, called *Lussebullar*, are a staple of the Swedish tradition of St. Lucia's Day, a winter-solstice celebration. The recipe is from Jennifer Jansch, whose children serve their parents the buns every Dec. 13, when the holiday is observed. —Sam Sifton



Featured in: [Diverse Holiday Feasts From Five New York Families](#). Recipe on back side.

## ST. LUCIA BUNS: RECIPE

### INGREDIENTS

- 6 ounces butter, melted
- 2 ½ cups lukewarm milk
- ¾ teaspoon saffron
- 1 cup sugar
- 1.7 ounces fresh yeast
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 pounds wheat flour, or as needed
- Beaten egg, for brushing
- Raisins, for garnish.

### PREPARATION

1. Place the butter and milk in a medium bowl. Using a mortar and pestle, grind the saffron with a pinch of the sugar, and stir into the mixture. In a large bowl, dissolve the yeast in a little of the lukewarm butter mixture, then add the remaining butter mixture, the remaining sugar and the salt.

2. Gradually add enough of the flour (almost all of it) to make a workable dough, kneading for 10 minutes by hand or 5 minutes in a mixer with a dough hook. Shape into a ball, sprinkle with a little flour and cover with a cloth. Allow to rise in a warm spot for 30 to 45 minutes.

3. Transfer the dough to a floured work surface, and knead in additional flour if the dough is sticky. Shape as desired into buns, braids or lengths. Place on lined baking sheets, and allow to rise again for 30 to 45 minutes. Preheat the oven to 400.

4. Brush the buns with beaten egg, and press raisins lightly into the dough. Bake until golden and risen, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a bun comes out dry. Smaller buns may take 8 to 10 minutes; larger lengths and braids, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool the buns on a rack under a cloth.



## OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE: DECEMBER 12:

The image to the left appeared on St. Juan Diego's cloak after the Virgin Mary appeared to him in 1531 near current day Mexico City. The image was full of symbolism for the indigenous people of Mexico as well as for Catholics. Juan Diego was a poor peasant who encountered Mary in the winter on the way to Mass on at least 5 occasions. The Catholic Church built on the site of the apparitions is the most visited Catholic shrine in the world.

### HOW TO CELEBRATE THIS FEAST DAY:

This is the most popular Feast Day for Hispanics in the U.S. This Feast is celebrated in parishes throughout the country by doing reenactments of the apparitions of our Lady to St. Juan Diego, praying a Rosary in the morning of Dec 12 dedicated to her, singing a special song called, Las Mañanitas and Mariachi Bands singing songs in honor of Mary. Las Mañanitas is a traditional song in Spanish that Mexicans sing to honor a loved one on their birthday or All Saint's Day, and it is also sung on other important holidays, such as Mother's Day and the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.