

A Christmas Tree Blessing:

Dear God of Love, Two thousand years ago, you brought your son, Jesus into this world to teach us the power of love and sacrifice. As we raise this tree, we remember his birth and the meaning of his life for us. Bless this tree as a symbol of our celebration of Jesus' birth and our gratitude for his sacrifice. May the joy this tree brings and the gifts we place under it remind us of the many gifts you have given us. We ask your blessings upon our loved ones, this day and always. Amen.

A Prayer to Share What I have:

Lord, this Advent I humbly pray to celebrate the reality of Your presence in my life. I celebrate Your birth, Your life, Your death and Your resurrection. And as I celebrate, help me to be as you would be to those in need around me. Open my eyes and let me see them as You see them! Help me to be a giving person, to share the joy of a simple Christmas with all around me. Amen

Christmas Eve Prayer:

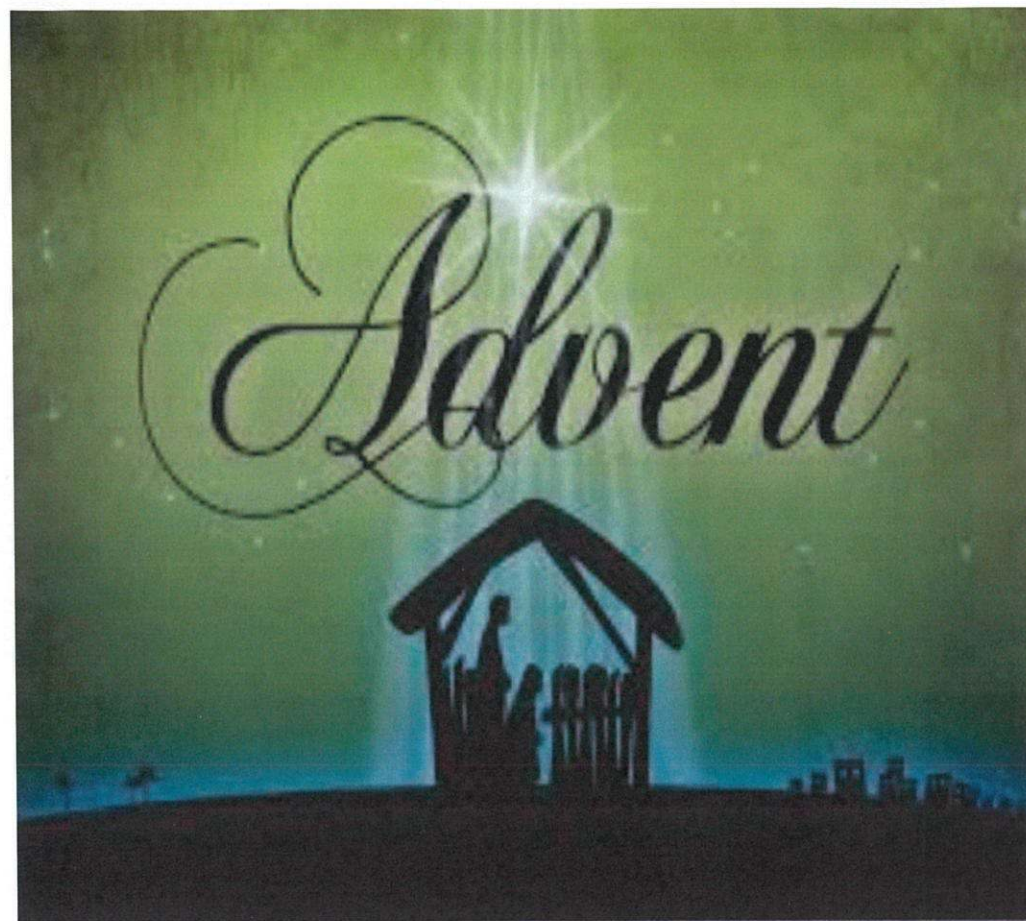
May we be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the Magi, and the peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless us now and forever. Amen.

A Prayer for those who are grieving at Christmas:

God our Father, I am so overwhelmed. My heart is heavy, burdened. The losses this year are crushing me, overcoming my peace and joy. As I walk through the trials of this life, I am learning yet again to trust you. I know when I come out on the other side, I will find you completely faithful. I know you will help me. Give me vision to see the many ways you are working right here around me, the many ways you are helping me. Fill my heart with joy so I burst out in songs of thanksgiving. Calm my fears. Rejoice over me. Help me feel your love in tangible ways. Through your son, Jesus Christ.

A Short Prayer of Christmas Thanks:

Thank you for the joys we have this Christmas. May the gifts we share this remind us of the Messiah, the greatest treasure of your Son, who would lay down his life for us. Amen



**Your guide
to Advent
Good Shepherd
Parish**

What is Advent?

Advent is *traditionally* a season of *hopeful waiting* and *preparation* for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas as well as a *joyful* time awaiting the return of Jesus at the second coming.

TRADITION UP-HELD

Wreath and Candles: We use symbols of old, to advertise the season—symbols such as the Advent Wreath and colourful candles which speak of the significance of the season. The Advent Wreath was designed many centuries ago, to help children wait patiently for Christmas. Each Sunday had a large candle and each weekday had a smaller candle. The candles were placed in a circle and one was lit each day. Today, our Advent Wreath contains **four candles**, each one representing one of the **four** Sundays of **Advent**. In the centre of the circle is a fifth **candle** (traditionally white), the **Christ Candle**, which is lit on Christmas Day. The Christ candle is coloured white because this is the traditional **colour** of feast days in the Western Church. In many Catholic churches, the most popular **colours** for the four surrounding **Advent** candles are violet and rose, corresponding with the **colours** of the liturgical vestments for the Sundays of **Advent**.



The Jesse Tree: Jesse Trees are a very old Christmas Tradition and first started in medieval times. They are a great way to help tell the story of the Bible from creation to the Christmas Story. Each week the Children's Liturgy group will cover a story from The Gospels of Advent, and decorate their Jesse tree with thoughts from the Children about the life of Jesus. Our CIA Youth will also contribute.

The tree is symbolised by a branch—a branch is a sign of new life and new beginnings. Jesus was a descendent of King David and Christians believe that Jesus is this new branch.

Advent Calendars: You may wish to purchase Advent Calendars for your home. Or simply delight in the Parish Childrens' Liturgy celebration as they open up a new window each Sunday, focussing our thoughts and prayers on the themes of Hope, peace, Joy and Love. A terrific activity to prepare ourselves for the births of baby Jesus.

JOYFUL

Participation in the joyful occasions that Advent brings us, is a great way to prepare for the coming of our Saviour.

- Look for opportunities to join in Carols at our Parish, before each Christmas Mass and in our Community.
- Visit St Kieran's School for their Nativity play being held Tuesday 4th December at 8.30am All parishioners, family and friends are welcome.
- Visit St Joseph's School for their Nativity Pageant—at 8.40am on Friday 7th December.
- Share in the joy with special foods after each Mass. Stay for a cup of tea or coffee and chat with other parishioners and visitors to our Parish. You could bring a plate to share.
- The Council of Christian Churches are holding traditional Carols on Civic Centre Lawns on Sunday 23rd Time to be advised.

PRAYERFUL CELEBRATION

- You may notice our Mass liturgies during Advent include special prayers: - prayers to the saints whose feast days fall in this time, especially St Anthony and St Nicholas. We invite you to pray to the Saints at this time.
- Advent Angel—which is a bit like Secret Santa. Our Parish plans to pray for those on our Sick list this Advent, and you are invited to be an Angel, draw a name from the basket and pray for that person. You may like to take a few names, or take a different name each week. Your prayers are needed for those suffering and in need. We have included prayers for the sick on the back of this booklet.



- On the back of this booklet, is a blessing that you can give at home, for your Christmas preparations, for sharing of your foods. In European countries, it is a tradition to bless the trees decorated in their homes—trees being a symbol of new life.

PREPARING OURSELVES

Advent is a season leading into a season of great joy and festivities—Christmas. The time before any great feast is often dotted with some form of restraint—as in Lent before Easter. So for Advent, we are invited to prepare ourselves in various ways.

- Penance—ask for Healing, this Advent. Our Parish is holding a Healing Mass on Thursdayth December at 7.30pm
- Confession—ask Fr Mick for special confession times
- Alms giving—by way of contributing to the poor, consider special donations this Christmas at any of our Advent masses and services. All items donated will be included in Hampers that we are preparing for our poor and needy families in the Mount Isa community.
- Gifts for baby Jesus—there is an empty cradle in our church. We hope you may like to donate a gift for “baby” to be placed in this cradle. The idea is to use the gifts for our young parents in Mount Isa. Symbolically buy a gift for baby Jesus, and in reality, you are helping all young parents who are in this time of waiting.
- We have Advent Reflections prepared for our Masses, for you to enjoy and reflect about what Advent means for you.

