

HELP YOUR FAMILY*find the perfect gift***OF JESUS CHRIST**

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS FAMILY TRADITIONS

Start your own family traditions!

Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children. Traditions are a wonderful way for parents to pass a living faith to their children and keep it burning in their own hearts. Think of specific food, songs, and prayers from your childhood that remind you of the Advent and Christmas season. Create a celebration around the preparation and sharing of the meal, incorporate stories and songs of the seasons to enrich the experience and come together for prayer as a family, sharing your needs and giving thanks for your blessings before God. Share the stories of your own childhood experiences as your family creates new shared memories.

Three Elements of a Christian Tradition

If you do not take part in an advent tradition already—or even if you do—starting a family tradition is easy. First think about these three elements that make a tradition:

1. *Prayer*

During Advent and Christmas we celebrate God becoming man in Jesus. In prayer we are able to gather together around our Lord's manger, telling Him our struggles, thanking Him for our blessings and receiving His divine love.

2. *Food*

Early Christian communities were characterized by the communal breaking of the bread. This experience of a shared meal helped strengthen the filial bonds among Christians. Today, the presence of food in our Christian traditions point to God's great providence, and give us a glimpse of the great feast we look forward to in heaven.

3. *Celebration*

Storytelling engages all generations in a form of prayer that celebrates the joy that is within our hearts. In all Christian traditions, storytelling through music, oral histories and reading celebrates where we've come from and who we are as children of God. Music can be especially powerful. As St. Augustine said, "He who sings, prays twice!"

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Creating your family tradition

Think of some things your family already enjoys together and consider some of the examples and suggestions below. Now you're ready to create your own family tradition! Write your ideas below and share your experience with others in the Archdiocese of Washington by using **#ADWPerfectGift** on social media.

Choose a *prayer*, share some *food*, and *celebrate* a song or story. Then repeat your tradition throughout advent. Write it down, take pictures and do it each year with your family. You're sure to experience the power of the Gospel taking root and transforming your own culture!

Questions to help you get started:

Can you name 3 Advent or Christmas items special to your family? An advent wreath, Nativity set, or Bible? Consider using one of those items to begin forming your tradition!

WHEN DO WE GATHER FOR OUR TRADITION?

The PRAYER we say:

Some families say a prayer before lighting each candle on their Advent Wreath!

The FOOD we share:

Many families enjoy special Christmas cookies and have fun baking them together!

The CELEBRATION we have:

Do you have a favorite Christmas hymn? Consider reading the Nativity story in the Bible!

For more ideas, including prayers, recipes, songs and stories, and to discover Advent and Christmas in the Archdiocese of Washington, go to findtheprecgift.org

