

# Observing Advent at Home

A lot of what Jesus taught expanded on the teachings of Judaism, but some of what he said was downright countercultural to the society both then and today. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. If a man takes your coat, give him your shirt. If someone slaps you on your cheek, give him the other one. Following Jesus sure seems to require doing things that differ from the norm!

In the Letter to the Romans, Paul tells us point blank to “not conform to the patterns of this world.” That quote needs to be considered as holiday advertising begins earlier and earlier. Here in the icy northern Midwest, most people are hanging their Christmas lights before the end of October. Is that the pattern to which we conform?

## Consider what decorating your home for Advent can offer your family.

All of this rush to Christmas, well in advance of Christmas Time, makes keeping Advent all the harder. Surrounded by the bustle of shopping, the constancy of Christmas carols via radio, the parties and the holiday circulars, how can we listen to Paul’s counsel to “not conform to the patterns of this world”? Here are a few thoughts.

Prepare the way of the Lord before the First Sunday of Advent by deciding what your seasonal practice will be with your family. Perhaps you will pray with and light an Advent wreath. Do you know its history, the meaning of the colors, and more? Learn together. Perhaps you’ll create ornaments for a Jesse Tree. Maybe your family will mark the passing of each day with an Advent calendar.

Violet is the color of the season. Perhaps you can reflect the liturgical environment of your parish by using a violet tablecloth during these weeks. Try designating one night as a special candlelight dinner night. On this night, you will let go of artificial light and enjoy the tranquility of darkness. Bundle up and do some stargazing: the Magi who found Jesus were



astronomers of their time. Learn the “O” Antiphons and pray with them the last seven days of Advent. Ask each other, “What would the Prince of Peace want for our world today?”

And, perhaps, hold off on putting up the tree. Countercultural, I know. Yes, this may require breaking with family custom. Consider, though, what decorating your home for Advent can offer your family and how the rhythm of moving through Advent, this holy peaceful season, will bring you to the celebration and joy of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day.