

Enhance your family prayer with
FAMILY ROSARY

Seven Ways to Observe Advent with Children

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THE FAMILY THAT PRAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER

WELCOME TO OUR FAMILY

Perhaps you too have had the experience of preparing for Christmas, only to realize that amongst the candy-making, the letter-writing, the present-purchasing, the tree-trimming, and more, you never got around to spiritual preparation, even though you really meant to this year.

If you would like to add a more reflective or penitential note to your family's Advent observance, check out these seven ideas to get you started. Choose one (or two), gather what you need, and start a new family tradition!

A LITTLE HISTORY

Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C. began his ministry in 1942 with the goal of building **family unity** through daily prayer of the Rosary. Inspired by his own father who had a deep devotion to family prayer, praying the Rosary became the foundation for the life of Father Peyton (1909-92).

We at Family Rosary are ever so grateful Father Peyton's family instilled in him the importance of **family prayer**. Now it can be part of your family's tradition so you can fulfill the vision that "The Family That Prays Together Stays Together," the message created by Father Patrick Peyton, C.S.C., so many years ago.



ADVENT IS A TIME TO PREPARE OUR HEARTS TO
RECEIVE CHRIST, OUR SAVIOUR AND HOPE.

POPE FRANCIS

SEVEN WAYS TO OBSERVE ADVENT

Here are some ideas to help you and your family observe Advent and most importantly keep it simple and stress-free, while focusing on the true meaning of the season:

JESSE TREE

The idea: Recall salvation history. Use ornaments decorated with symbols to represent the events and stories leading up to the birth of Jesus and hang them on a tree of some kind (the tree is so named after Jesse, father of King David — see Isaiah 11:1).

What you will need:

- You can order a kit. Check out [Etsy](#) for some beautiful ones.
- Or you can do it yourself ... you need something to be the tree, something to make ornaments, and a Bible or knowledge of Bible stories. I use a book that has reproducible ornaments. Each year I photocopy one set of ornaments for each child. I cut out a large Christmas tree shape from wrapping paper and tape it on the wall. Each day (when all goes well), the kids color their ornaments while I read to them the passage from the Bible corresponding to the symbol they are coloring. They then cut out their ornaments and tape them on the tree.
- The tree can also be a bare branch set into a mason jar full of stones or sand, and the ornaments can be hung on it with loops of ribbon.

ADVENT STOCKINGS: GOOD WORKS

The idea: The family does a spiritual or corporal work of mercy (or other charitable act) each day of Advent. For example, we might give away a piece of clothing; pray for an end to abortion; pray for our priests; call someone who might be lonely, and so on.

You need:

- Slips of paper listing the good works you will do (see the end of this post for ideas).
- Something to put them in. I have mini-stockings with numbers on them, which we hang up. Every evening I put a slip of paper in the next day's stocking, choosing the activity based on what can fit into our family schedule. But you could easily do the same with numbered envelopes or, if you are really adventurous, just put them all in a mason jar and see what you pull out!

MAKING SOFT BABY JESUS' BED

The idea: Family members make sacrifices and do good acts throughout Advent. For each one, they lay a piece of straw or hay in an empty manger, trying to get the bed as soft as possible before Baby Jesus will be born on Christmas morning.

You need:

- Raffia, hay, straw, grass, or strips of yellow construction paper.
- Some sort of manger.
- Baby Jesus statue.

ADVENT WREATH

The idea: Four candles represent the four Sundays of Advent. Three are purple to represent penance; the fourth is pink for Gaudete Sunday (the 3rd Sunday of Advent. Gaudete means “joy,” and the priest will wear rose-colored vestments).

On the first Sunday of Advent, light the purple candle that is diagonal from the pink one. Say a prayer of longing for Our Savior. Every evening light this candle, accompanied by a prayer, and each successive Sunday light an additional candle. For a guided prayer you may be interested in Lisa Hendey's [O Radiant Dawn](#).

You need:

- An Advent wreath/candle holder
- Candles

SALVATION HISTORY CANDLE

The idea: Similar to a Jesse tree but for the artistic. You will draw on a large candle (about 2 feet tall) the scenes from salvation history, starting with Adam and Eve at the top and Baby Jesus at the bottom. You will burn the candle throughout Advent.

You need:

- A church-style large candle, 51% beeswax, about 2' tall. Can be found at stjudeshop.com.
- Drawing implements

PLANNED READ-ALOUDS

The idea: Read Advent and Nativity books during Advent: either one story per day in a book of collected Advent stories or separate books.

You need:

- A book with a collection of 22-28 Advent stories (here is the [one option](#)); or
- 22-28 picture books that are Advent-related, about saints whose feast day falls in Advent, or about salvation history. If you choose this option, you might want to wrap them in wrapping paper and number them, opening up one on each day.

ADVENT PIECE-BY-PIECE NATIVITY SET

The idea: Rather than give a little piece of candy in an Advent calendar, each day brings another object or person to add to the nativity scene, starting with the stable/cave and ending with Baby Jesus.

You need:

- You can buy a nativity set online that has the requisite number of pieces; or
- You can make one yourself out of felt, bringing out one piece each day; or
- Your children make their own paper nativity set, coloring a piece every day using free printables online.

RESOURCES:

Here is a list of good works you might use for your family's Advent stockings.

- Do something nice for someone in secret today.
- Look around your room. Is there anything you can give away to the poor?
- Do an extra chore today.
- Try hard to be cheerful in everything you do today.
- Draw a picture of the nativity.
- Read about a saint today.
- Pray for your priest today. Could you offer up a sacrifice for the Church today?
- Pray for an end to abortion today and give away something to moms in need.
- Write or draw a thank-you card for someone.
- Pray for persecuted Christians today and learn about a country where they do not have freedom of religion.
- Pray for people who do not know Jesus. Is there something you could do extra as an offering for them?
- Pray for your family today. What can you do to help your family be more like the Holy Family?
- Pray a Rosary today.
- Pray the Chaplet of Divine mercy.
- Do an examination of conscience tonight, and if possible, schedule Confession sometime soon.
- Take a meal to someone in need.
- Make a card to send to someone who lives far away.

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Amanda Woodiel is a Catholic convert, a mother to five children ages 9 to 1, a slipshod housekeeper, an enamored wife, and a “good enough” homeschooler who happens to believe that the circumstances of her life--both good and bad--are pregnant with grace. Read more of her thoughts on faith and motherhood at [In a Place of Grace](#) and at [Amazing Catechists](#).

BRINGING FAMILIES TOGETHER IN PRAYER

To learn more about the changing seasons in the Church, watch Catholic Central's episode on [The Liturgical Year](#) and [Advent](#).

This e-book and all our resources represent a culmination of Father Peyton's passion for family unity through prayer. We hope our services will enhance your family's prayer life particularly remembering Father Peyton's famous words, "*The Family That Prays Together Stays Together.*"

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