

Guide: Fun Family Activities for Advent and Christmas

Use the list below to add some fun to the last month of the calendar year, the season of expectation and the season of celebrating our Lord's birth!

Sunday, November 29: First Sunday of Advent

Advent Window Décor: Today we begin the season of Advent. You're probably getting ready to string your Christmas lights ... or maybe you're ahead of the game and have already finished your outdoor display! Either way, consider [this Advent window craft](#), perfect for families with young children. The supplies are simple, but the finished products will make a dramatic impact on passersby.

Monday, November 30

Time to Volunteer: Time off school next month can mean time to give back. In the wake of COVID-19, consider ways to give back to others *safely*. Before Christmas break begins, have your child speak with their religious education coordinators at the parish to determine what types of volunteer opportunities are available in the area. Some ideas include:

1. A clothing drive for a local homeless shelter
2. Creating activity packets for senior citizens with crossword puzzles, word searches, sudokus, and more
3. Assist with an adopt-a-family initiative at your parish by sorting and wrapping gifts
4. Sending care packages to overseas troops

Tuesday, December 1

Colored Carnation Experiment: It's always refreshing to bring some florals indoors during the winter months. One way to incorporate your little artists is with [color-changing flowers](#). Select a bunch of white carnations from your local grocer or florist and cut each stem at a 45-degree angle. Then, fill clear glasses with clean water. Finally, put 3-4 drops of food coloring in each cup and add one flower to each. Day after day your family can watch the colors of the carnations change. Will you stick with traditional red and green or make a glorious rainbow bouquet?

Wednesday, December 2

Declutter and Donate: Before you break out all your Christmas décor and the kids open their treasured gifts, be sure to declutter and donate! Give each member of the family a trash bag or moving box. Then, instruct each member to fill their vessel with items to donate: clothing, toys, cookware, etc. This will ensure your home is clean and organized for the bustling holiday season, plus you're teaching the importance of giving to those in need.

Thursday, December 3

Laugh and Cry with a Silly Fashion Show: Halloween costumes, dance recital wear, sports uniforms, hand-me-downs...Mom's prom dress from 1986. Our houses are full of discarded but

beloved apparel. Collect a pile of funky wear and have your family develop a hilarious fashion show.

Friday, December 4

Room Makeover: Now is an ideal time to rework the kids' rooms. Most middle school and high school students are ready to get rid of "the kiddie stuff" cluttering their spaces. Challenge them to design, declutter, and organize their rooms to complete a bedroom redesign that reflects them. Additional ideas include allowing them to move unused furniture and décor from other rooms in the house or giving them a small budget to purchase pictures, posters, reading lamps, etc.

Saturday, December 5

Reminder! December 6 is St. Nicholas Day: The most popular tradition is leaving out shoes for St. Nicholas to fill with candy and trinkets the night before his big day. [Here are some simple ideas](#) to keep the spirit of St. Nicholas alive in your own home, including a children's prayer.

Sunday, December 6: Second Sunday of Advent (usually St. Nicholas Day)

Get Creative with Jesse Tree-inspired Ornaments: This activity will take your family on an Advent journey inspired by the Jesse Tree. Each day you'll work together to find items around the house that help tell the story of God's movement in history. From Noah's Ark to the manger, get ready to put your imagination to work! Read more about the Jesse Tree tradition and ornament ideas [here](#).

Monday, December 7

Christmas Coupon Book: Create the gift that keeps on giving, a custom coupon book for your family. Create slips of paper promising freebies like "extra scoop of ice cream," "stay up one hour late," or "skip washing the dishes." If your children complete their homework or household chores, give them permission to turn in a coupon. Also, encourage your children to create a coupon book for their extra nice parents!

Tuesday, December 8: Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Celebrate the Day: Mary is one of the most important figures in our faith. Take the time to explain the importance of our Virgin Mother, recite prayers dedicated to Her and encourage your little ones to create devotionals. [Here's a link to free coloring sheets](#) featuring Mary.

Wednesday, December 9

Create a Christmas Playlist: Are you more of a modern "Jingle Bell Rock" or a traditional "O Holy Night" person? Create a Christmas playlist to enjoy as a family. Whether you're baking cookies for Santa or driving in the car looking at holiday lights, this playlist will set the mood and offer a little something for everyone. [Here's a look at popular songs](#) to help start your list.

Thursday, December 10

Write Caring Cards to Seniors: Give the gift of friendship this season by creating Christmas cards for senior citizens in your community. Not everyone is blessed with a busy, lively

household. It's important to remember that many elderly are feeling lonely this time of year. Using household crafting supplies like wrapping paper, newspapers and construction paper, create a stack of heartfelt cards for a local nursing home or hospice.

Friday, December 11

Kids' Restaurant at Home: A lot of work goes into running a restaurant: table settings, menu development, cooking, and excellent customer service. Is your family up to the challenge? Encourage your children to develop their own restaurant at home! From selecting the restaurant's name to cooking each dish, let them serve up a memorable night while the parents simply sit back and enjoy. You can decide to tip the staff for their remarkable service!

Saturday, December 12: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Celebrate Our Lady's Day: Under her title "Our Lady of Guadalupe," Mary is the patroness of the Americas. Take time to retell this story to your children, including the miraculous impression she left on St. Juan Diego's tilma. You can then have your kids create their own tilmas using [these instructions](#).

Sunday, December 13: Third Sunday of Advent (usually Memorial of St. Lucy)

Celebrate St. Lucy: On December 13, the Catholic Church recognizes St. Lucy, the patron saint of the blind. As a young woman, St. Lucy dedicated herself to Christ. Her bravery makes her an excellent role model for young adults. As a family, [learn more](#) about St. Lucy's life. Can you think of anyone who would benefit from St. Lucy's prayers and protection? Take the time to say a prayer for that person.

Monday, December 14

Seed Growth Activity: Plant a seed and watch it grow—literally! This fun indoor activity teaches your kids about seed germination. The only supplies you need are one plastic bag, one paper towel, seeds, and a bright and sunny window. For step-by-step instructions head to this Scholastic article, [Germinate Seeds and Watch Them Sprout on a Windowsill](#).

Tuesday, December 15

Bless Your Christmas Tree: Real or fake? Flocked or traditional? White lights or multicolored? We love our Christmas tree traditions. But when was the last time you blessed your tree? Learn about the in-home blessing your family can celebrate together with help from [Loyola Press](#).

Wednesday, December 16

Digital Detox: Have you caught your teen (or yourself) scrolling through countless apps? While many digital devices have beneficial components, others simply create unneeded distractions. Now is the time to participate in a family digital detox. Sit down together, start a timer for 25 minutes, and go through all smartphones and devices to determine what needs to go! It's a way to cleanse your devices and your minds.

Thursday, December 17

Gift Wrapping Station: Gift wrapping: love it or leave it? Set up a gift-wrapping command center in your home complete with wrapping paper, tape, scissors, ribbon, tissue paper, etc. Once complete, your children can offer their wrapping services to busy family members.

Friday, December 18

Elevate this Year's Gingerbread House: Constructing gingerbread houses is a beloved tradition. This year try something new with help from this article featuring [25 ideas, tips, and tricks](#). From creating the ultimate “frosting glue” to stunning rooftop designs, which unique techniques will your family try?

Saturday, December 19

Recipes from Around the World: We all know and love the traditional Christmas cookie staples. This year try mixing in new recipes. A fun (and educational!) idea is to select a dessert recipe specific to a foreign country. For a bit of worldly inspiration visit [Spoon University](#) and [Fodors](#).

Sunday, December 20: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Fort Night: No ... not that *Fortnite*. It's time to set up camp—indoors. Revive the art of the in-home fort with a supply of blankets, pillows, Christmas lights, flashlights, etc. (Maybe you'll get extra creative with a small tent or inflatable mattress?) Work together as a family or split off into teams to plan and construct the ultimate fort!

Monday, December 21

Easy Rosary Craft: Thinking of last-minute gifts for teachers, grandparents, and neighbors? [This rosary craft](#) is perfect for young children.

Tuesday, December 22

The No Electricity Challenge: Go green and live like your ancestors! If your kids are glued to digital screens, try turning off the electricity for a day to give them a taste of what it's like to use your imagination and work together as a family. The rules: no lights, no lamps, no TVs, no iPads, etc. Instead, rely on the entertainment of books and board games, and the light of candles. *But remember to keep that refrigerator and heater running!*

Wednesday, December 23

Guessing Jar Game: It's time to put your math skills to the test. (In reality, your guessing skills.) Collect clear jars that can be found around your house. Fill each jar with goodies. Goodies can include goldfish crackers, chocolate chips, grapes, Cheerios, or whatever you have in the pantry! Then, allow your kids to guess how many items are in each jar. At the end of the day, the closest guesses win the jar.

Thursday, December 24: Christmas Eve

DIY Nativity Scene: What's not to love about the Nativity scene, especially on Christmas Eve? From the baby Jesus to the three kings to the farm animals, there's something magical for everyone. Encourage your kids to use their imagination to create their own DIY Nativity scenes.

Look for items around your home: construction paper, felt, stuffed animals, Legos, Lincoln Logs ... anything goes!

Friday, December 25: Christmas Day

Host a Candy Cane Hunt: After the flurry of unwrapping gifts winds down, plan one last surprise for your family. Check out [this activity listed at #4](#) that involves every member of the family, a bit of creativity, and sweet treats! It's a fun and simple tradition.

Give Thanks: On Christmas, we have a lot to be thankful for. Prepare for Christmas afternoon with a stack of thank-you cards. Each family member should take some quiet time to reflect on the day and write notes for the blessings they received this season.

December 26

Create a Reading Nook: Reading: an enlightening, important, and QUIET activity. One way to encourage more reading is to create a dedicated reading nook in your house. Think of a quiet corner or a comfy armchair that you can equip for the ultimate reading experience using cozy blankets, a bright lamp, and a space for extra books.

Sunday, December 27

Pet Sitting: Are your kids begging for a new pet? Give them a reality check and allow them the opportunity to babysit for a neighbor, friend, or family member. Discuss with your child the ground rules: what type of animal, how many days, who will feed them, what room the pet will stay in, etc. before committing!

Monday, December 28

Make Breakfast for Dinner: In a cooking rut? Mix up your family dinner routine by flipping the schedule...how does breakfast for dinner sound? The effort of cooking a "big breakfast" at 7 a.m. can feel daunting this time of year. Instead start the prep work in the evening to give you and your children more time to create the ultimate feast: sizzling bacon, hash browns, scrambled eggs, fruit salad, etc.

Tuesday, December 29

Create an Inexpensive Homemade Mass Kit: If you want your kids to understand the Mass a little better in the new year, consider crafting your own Mass kit. This [step-by-step tutorial](#) shows you how to make an age-appropriate kit using items from around your home so your kids can learn about the source and summit of our lives as Catholics.

Wednesday, December 30

Family Bucket List: New year, same family! What will you accomplish in 2021? From planning a road trip to learning a new sport, sit together as a group to create and finalize your family bucket list. The goal is to list ideas that are beneficial for all family members. Challenge yourselves to do each activity by the end of next year.

Thursday, December 31: New Year's Eve

Make a Family Time Capsule: A LOT happened in 2020. From wearing protective face masks to relying on distance learning, families adjusted to a new normal. What does your family want to remember from this time? To celebrate the new year, create a family time capsule by filling a clear container or box with memorabilia from throughout the year.

Friday, January 1: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Journal to Start the New Year Fresh: Start the new year with a clean slate—literally. Encourage each member of your family to start a journal beginning January 1, 2021. Remember that journal entries come in countless forms: colored pictures, photographs, to-do lists, prayers, etc. By writing down our feelings, our hopes, and our thoughts we teach our children the importance of daily reflections.