

Happy New Year

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR.

It's a time of great anticipation as we await the arrival of Christ on Christmas morning. In fact, the word Advent comes from the Latin word *ad-venire* that means coming or arriving.

Just as in Lent, the liturgical color of Advent is purple. Both of the seasons prepare for great feast days in the Church year. The purple color also connotes the penitential dimension of the season as Advent is a time of preparing, quieting and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas. The altar is also meant to be decorated in a more restrained manner during this season.

The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and also to the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas. Right in the middle of Advent, several Marian feasts are also celebrated. They are the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The final days of Advent, from December 17 to December 24, focus particularly on our preparation for the celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas).

"At Christmas, we on earth receive Jesus, the bread from heaven. It is a bread that never grows stale, but enables us even now to have a foretaste of eternal life. . . I want to come to Bethlehem, Lord, because there you await me. I want to realize that you, lying in a manger, are *the bread of my life*. I need the tender fragrance of your love so that I, in turn, can be bread broken for the world." (Pope Francis, Homily, Dec. 24, 2019)



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