

Christmas

Adding Some Spark & Sparkle

■ by Dr. Janet Irvine, Clinical Psychologist



The holidays have come far from quietly and joyfully celebrating the birth of the child Jesus to becoming stressful and harried. After December 25th, it's all over. What a let-down!

As an alternative, try adding some spirit with many lovely, long-lost and Christ-centered ways to put Jesus--the real spark and sparkle--into the holidays.

During the four weeks before Christmas, celebrate Advent. Celebrate Christmastide through January 6th. There are lots of ideas on the internet!

- Make an advent wreath, and spend time in quiet prayer daily. Continue the time of quiet anticipation and put tree up only the week before Christmas. Elaborate on decorations as the days of Advent go by.
- On December 1, make a paper chain for each day in Advent. Write and practice a special act of kindness for each day.
- Check out making Jesse Tree ornaments, which trace the lineage of Jesus. Make Chrismons; these ornaments represent various symbols of Jesus.
- Get an Advent Calendar focused on the nativity story.
- Put up a stable. Put Jesus in the manger on Christmas Eve. Put the wise men in a room furthest away and move them daily, to arrive at the stable on January 6th, Epiphany Day.
- Observe St. Nicholas Day on Dec. 8th. He was a godly and generous man and the model for "Santa Claus."
- Give generously to the poor, the sick, the friendless and the needy.
- Celebrate "Christmastide" through January 6th, the arrival of the Magi (Epiphany Day). Make a King's Cake, keep up your tree and continue to celebrate the birth of Jesus.
- Sing and play Christmas Carols.

Light lots of candles, and as you hang your lights, remember that Jesus is the Light of the World. He will add the Spark and the Sparkle!

Online Resources:

Advent: <http://catholicism.about.com/od/holydaysandholidays/p/Advent.htm>
Christmastide: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmastide>
Advent Wreath: <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0132.html>
Jesse Tree: <http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19971201/FRIDGE/FRIDGE1.HTM>
Jesse Tree YouTube Video: http://youtu.be/6-a6b6Ac_2s
Chrismons: <http://www.whychristmas.com/customs/chrismons.shtml>
Advent Calendar: <http://littleblots.com/BibleCraftsAdventCalendar.html>
Epiphany: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_\(holiday\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_(holiday))
St. Nicholas: <http://www.stnicholascenter.org>

All past newsletters/articles can be viewed on our website.
<http://www.chicagochristiancounseling.org/newsletters.html>



Janet Irvine enjoys working with children and families in our Orland Park location.

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