

# Advent: easy, fun, and spiritual ways to celebrate

By Catholic Digest Staff (This article appears online at: <http://www.catholicdigest.com>)

Advent is an exciting but busy season. It would be nice to be able to slow down and devote more time to prayer and traditions. However, most of us are busy people – we have work, school, or children with their own busy schedules. It's hard to find the time to enjoy and celebrate the coming of Jesus.

**What is Advent really all about?** It is very easy to feel out of sync with Advent. Slow down? Don't set up and light the tree? Don't sing Christmas carols until Christmas? How can one avoid all the shopping and gift-buying? It seems totally unrealistic, even Grinch-like.

But the Church is right - Advent is about slowing down. It's about a world in darkness yearning for light and warmth. It's about stepping back from the frantic pace of our lives - even if it is just for a few minutes - to think of how the world is and how we dream it could be as we prepare to celebrate Christ's birth, wait for his coming again in glory, and, in between, remember all the ways we encounter him everyday.

If we lived in a monastery, we might be able to devote every waking moment to prayer and ritual. But Advent is for busy people with work and school schedules, too. There are many small ways to enter into Advent and to let it grow in our hearts and enrich whatever else we do in this season.

**Advent is for you!** *Catholic Digest* presents ideas to help you connect with Advent: prayers, activities, and ideas to celebrate any day during Advent with your family. However, these are only suggestions to get you started. The important thing is to catch a sense of how Advent can enrich your life, faith, and spirituality, and then find ways to celebrate that work for you. Advent, like all of Catholic life, is meant to slowly change and transform us, so that, more and more, we not only recognize Christ, but become the Body of Christ, living and active in our world.

**Make your own Advent calendar or wreath** Use paper, glitter, glue, and branches to create a project that reminds you of the joy of Christ's love all through the Advent season

**Create a paper chain** Create one link for each day of the Advent season, but before linking it together, write an Advent Scripture quote or a good deed to do on each link. On each day of the Advent season, take off one link and reflect on the quote or do the good deed.

**Make a place for prayer** Make a prayer table with a Bible and candle. Light the candle every evening with the traditional Evening Prayer acclamation: "Jesus Christ is the light of the world. A light no darkness can overpower." Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking and praising God, in your own words, for life, for blessings, for love. Daily prayers can be found at [LivingWithChrist.us](http://LivingWithChrist.us).

**Visit a farm** You don't need to spend the night in a stable, but spending a day meetings a few sheep or a friendly donkey while taking in the sounds and smells of a farm can be a great way to connect with the reality of the incarnation. Jesus lived in our real world.



**Have a family movie night** Gather your family and watch films that help you enter into the season of Advent, like *The Nativity Story* (right). How does watching these films help you grow closer to the people behind the Bible accounts? How do they inspire you to live this Advent season?

**Plant a seed** Put a seed in a tiny container, pot, or jar in a sunny window and watch it grow throughout Advent. As you water it, pray that God's grace may water your soul, and his love and life may grow in your heart.

**Discover a new culture through a crèche** Learn about the many styles of nativity scenes designed and created by different people and cultures from around the world. Take a trip to visit a display or find a book from the library.

**Celebrate Las Posadas (December 16-24)** Gather friends or neighbors to celebrate Las Posadas, a custom of Mexican origin. Las Posadas is actually a novena that participants sing and act out, depicting Mary and Joseph's search for shelter to deliver their baby. Beginning on December 16, Las Posadas is celebrated for nine nights, ending on Christmas Eve.

**Give books or blankets** Offer items that will contribute to the education and well-being of newborn babies in a nearby hospital. Include a note of comfort or congratulations to the child's parents.

**Add the traditional O Antiphons to your prayer** The O Antiphons are sung or recited every day from December 17 to 23, each day highlighting a Scripture title for the Lord Jesus. Encourage your family to try their hands at creating different titles for Jesus that come from your own lives and thoughts (examples: "Gentle Healer;" "Loving Friend"). Create an ornament for each of the O Antiphons and for the titles you've created to hang on your tree.

**Celebrate your parents and parental figures** Mary and Joseph faced many challenges when they said "yes" to God in accepting Jesus. They also gave Jesus a home, food, and lots of love. How have your parents, grandparents, or other parental figures made a difference in your life? Tell them how much you appreciate them, whether with a card or letter, a special get-together, or a gift that reflects your gratitude in a personal way

# Celebrating the “Year of Consecrated Life:” A (Very!) Brief History of the Religious of the Assumption

(This article is available online at: <http://assumptionsisters.org/our-beginnings.html>)



## OUR BEGINNINGS

Saint Marie Eugénie Milleret founded the Religious of the Assumption in Paris in 1839. Her essential vision was one of transforming society through education. From the first community of five young women, the congregation quickly spread throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. Marie Eugénie taught that our faith in Jesus impels us to love the world and all its peoples. She believed that all action should flow from a life of love and prayer and tasked us with responding to the urgent needs of our times. Today we can be found in the inner city and in the suburbs, in the rural Southwest and in the urban Northeast. We teach in colleges and run after-school programs for children; we advocate for immigrants and teach English as a Second Language; we work in parishes and offer faith formation programs; all this and more we do with Christ...for love of the world.



RELIGIOUS of the  
ASSUMPTION

*With Christ... For Love of The World*

## SAINT MARIE EUGENIE MILLERET

Anne Eugenie Milleret, later to become Sr. Marie Eugenie of Jesus, was born in Metz, France on August 26, 1817. She grew up in a family that had no interest in religion or Jesus Christ, but that was passionate about politics and social justice. They deplored the injustices of a class system and the misery brought on by the rise of industrialization. For them, however, there was no connection between these concerns and Catholicism, the traditional religion of the French people. They instead found hope in the cry of the French Revolution for liberty, equality and fraternity.

Marie Eugenie's First Communion at the age of 12 was a life-changing experience of grace. Throughout her life she spoke often of this moment because she recognized it as the original grace from which everything else flowed.

When she was fifteen, Marie Eugenie's parents separated and she moved to Paris with her mother and brother, only to see her mother die of cholera shortly afterwards. Her father then sent her to live with relatives whose great interests proved to be money and pleasure. Alone, far from her brother who had been her constant companion, Eugenie wondered about the meaning of life and love. She had lost everything except her fervor for social and political questions and the desire to do good for others.

Her father then sent Marie Eugenie to live with very Catholic cousins in Paris. He wanted her to take her place in society like other young women of her age by marrying. She found the cousins' piety narrow and stifling. She had no real objection to marriage, but she rejected all suitors.

One day, her cousins invited her to the cathedral to hear a Lenten sermon preached by a priest famous for his eloquence and influence with the youth. His way of speaking of Christ and the Church led to her conversion.

She discovered that the ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity are rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ who is the universal and definitive Liberator, and that the Church possesses the secret of doing good here on earth. While there will always be suffering and difficulties, "God wills to establish a social order in which no human would have to suffer from the oppression of others." (Letter, 1843)

Less than a year later, a priest in the confessional, recognizing that Marie Eugenie had intelligence and a passion that could make a difference in society, asked to see her. He convinced her that the religious life and education were her vocation.

Marie Eugenie prepared herself by study and prayer and, at twenty-two, with four other young women, founded the Religious of the Assumption. Her life and work spanned most of the nineteenth century and quickly spread internationally. She taught that our faith in Jesus impels us to get involved in contemporary social issues and that all action should flow from a life of love and prayer.

In 1898, Marie Eugenie died on March 10th, now her feast day. She was beatified in 1975 by Pope Paul VI and canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on June 3rd, 2007.