

Ask, Father James:

“Is Advent a Season of Penance like Lent?”

People have asked me; How do we approach Advent? Is Advent like Lent? The two liturgical seasons seem similar because the Gloria is not said or sung and the sanctuary and ministers are draped in purple, the liturgical color of penance. While this observation is true, Advent is not mentioned as a penitential season in Canon Law. Canon Law #1250 says; “The penitential days and times in the universal Church are every Friday of the whole year and the season of Lent.” However, Canon Law #1249 advises that the “divine law binds all the Christian faithful to do penance each in his or her own way.” This means that even though Advent “is not a penitential season, one does not have to wait for Lent or particular penitential days to make sacrifices for God, or to give alms, or to perform acts of penance. This is why it is encouraged that in Advent we should all make a good examination of conscience and seek sacramental reconciliation.

While it is true that Advent is a season of preparation and reflection, hope and anticipation, it is also a season of repentance, of turning once more to Christ with renewed vigour. When we anticipate the coming of Christ. We’re waiting, and we’re waiting, and we’re waiting. The Purple colours of Advent signifies the repentance and patience of God’s people as they await the arrival of their Lord. While waiting, it is encouraged that we attend an advent liturgical service in anticipation of Christmas, set up a Nativity scene, read an advent series, and remember your neighbour and your church.

To live out the penitential spirit of Advent, it is encouraged that in addition to going to confession during this season, Catholics should in every day of advent, read a Bible verse and do some advent devotions, give something up, take on extra prayer, or perform acts of charity, such as participating in a parish “Angel Tree” program where parishioners buy presents for a child in need and also make a monetary donations to church in thanksgiving to God for sending Jesus Christ to the world.

Celebrate this Advent. The messages and text of the Advent readings allow us to Prepare, Repent, Rejoice and Celebrate - The Lord is near.



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