

CHRISTMAS SEASON						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Dec 17	18	19	20	21	22	23
4th Sun of Advent in Morning	24	25	26	27	28	29
The Octave of Christmas						
The 12 Days of Christmas						
Christmas begins at Sundown	The Nativity of Our Lord			The Holy Innocents		
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
The 12 Days						
Feast of the Holy Family	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God					Traditional Date of Epiphany
Solemnity of the Epiphany	Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord--end of the Christmas Season	9	10	11	12	13

The Christmas Season begins on Dec 25 and lasts for 16 days and ends on the Solemnity of the Baptism of the Lord.

The Octave of Christmas: The first 8 days of the Christmas Season. The two most important feasts each year are Christmas and Easter. Each of these solemnities has an Octave associated with it. An Octave is a prolongation of a feast for 8 days. Each day of the Octave of Christmas continues the solemnness of Christmas day. Thus, each day is like a little Christmas, culminating in the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. During the Octave, the Liturgy repeats itself in various ways to remind us that we are continuing the celebration of Christmas. For instance, we sing the Gloria every day of the Octave.

The Twelve Days of Christmas: The first 12 days of the Christmas Season, culminating in the Solemnity of the Epiphany of our Lord (when the Magi brought Jesus gifts). We all know the Christmas Carol, "The 12 Days of Christmas." This song first appeared in a children's book in 1780. The song we sing today comes from English composer Frederic Austin in 1909. The theory that the carol uses coded language to express theological beliefs has been debunked. The season of Christmas may be rooted in a pre-Christian tradition of celebrating the return of light around the time of the Winter solstice. The birth of Jesus, "the Light of the World" coincides well with this. The Celebration of 12 days of Christmas might have emerged from the fact that the Western and Eastern Churches celebrate Christmas on December 25 and January 6 respectively. This is a 12 day span.

Blessing of a Christmas Tree

When all have gathered, a suitable song may be sung. The leader makes the sign of the cross, and all reply "Amen."

The leader may greet those present in the following words:

Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever. **R/.** Amen.

In the following or similar words, the leader prepares those present for the blessing:

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

One of those present or the leader reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example, [Titus 3:4](#) (lines 4-7) or [Ezekiel 17:22](#) (lines 22-24 4; I will plant a tender shoot on the mountain heights of Israel.)

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

R/. Thanks be to God.

The intercessions are then said. The leader says:

Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

After the intercessions the leader invites all present to say the

Lord's Prayer.

The leader says the prayer with hands joined:

Lord our God,
we praise you for the light of creation:
the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.
We praise you for the light of Israel:
the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures. We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:
he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,
who fills us with the wonder of your love.
Lord God, let your blessing come upon us
as we illumine this tree.

May the light and cheer it gives
be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.
May all who delight in this tree
come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R/. Amen.

Continued.....

The lights of the tree are then illuminated. The leader concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:
May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy,
now
and forever.
R/. Amen.

The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

—From [Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers](#)

Blessing of a Manger Scene

All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. Who made heaven and earth.

One of those present or the leader reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example, [Luke 2:1](#) (lines 1-8) or [Isaiah 7:10](#) (lines 10-15, the birth of Emmanuel).

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

R/. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The leader prays with hands joined:

God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
you have made manifest your love:
when our need for a Savior was great
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.
To our lives he brings joy and peace,
justice, mercy, and love.

Lord,
bless all who look upon this manger;
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus,
and raise our thoughts to him,
who is God-with-us and Savior of all,
and who lives and reigns forever and ever.
R/. Amen.

—From [Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers](#)