

“Into this darkness the twenty-fifth of December comes as a celebration of the invincibility of the Light.”

### **What is Advent?**

The time of preparation for Christmas, called Advent (meaning ‘coming’), begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. (November 28 in 2010) The scripture readings focus on Israel’s preparation for the coming of the Messiah and, secondarily, on New Testament anticipation for the second coming of Christ.

In the northern hemisphere, Advent begins during that dark period of the solar year in which the days grow shorter and the nights longer. Trees lose their leaves and the days grow colder. In the midst of this darkness the Church proclaims the approach of God’s kingdom: “The true light, which enlightens every one, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him” (John 1:9-10). Into this darkness the twenty-fifth of December comes as a celebration of the invincibility of the Light.

### **The Light is Coming**

During the last half of December, when the Roman pagans celebrated the feast of the Unconquered Sun, the Church now gathers to proclaim that the Son has indeed come into the world. As John writes in the gospel: “In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:4-5). The Feast of Our Lord’s Nativity (December 25) celebrates the mystery of God’s incarnation in human flesh.

### **Christmas and Epiphany**

The fulfillment of God’s promise of light leads to the proclamation of this “good news.” So the celebration of Christmas is followed by the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6). Epiphany (meaning ‘to show forth’), celebrated on the 12th day after Christmas, commemorates the visit of the magi, wise ones who traveled from afar to worship the babe in Bethlehem and who represent all the nations of the world. Jesus is savior for all people. During this part of the Christmas season, we recall Jesus’ baptism and early ministry. The length of the season varies because it lasts until Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent.

In the season after Epiphany, we share the news that God’s love is for every person, for all of creation! Thus the thematic pattern of Advent-Christmas-Epiphany can be seen as

darkness-light-manifestation or as promise- fulfillment-proclamation.

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*This resource is from [Living the Good News](#), a lectionary-based, arts-enhanced curriculum published by [Morehouse Education Resources](#), available as a free resource to support those who use the curriculum.*