NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
MINISTRY WITH
YOUNG ADULTS

SEASONS

Advent with Young Adults

A four-week guide for ministry teams to keep Advent with young adults, and to keep it themselves

Pray
A weekly path through the Sunday Gospels

Gather
A team huddle and ideas for young adult gatherings

Keep
Feasts across cultures and a personal Advent plan

A free resource from the National Institute for Ministry with Young Adults · ministrywithyoungadults.org

WHY ADVENT

A season made for waiting

Young adults know a lot about waiting: for a job offer, a diagnosis, a visa, a relationship to become clear, a sense of where God is leading. Advent doesn't rush that waiting. It teaches us to wait with hope, because the One we wait for has already promised to come.

Advent has two parts. Until December 16, the readings look toward Christ's coming at the end of time and ask us to stay awake. From December 17 to 24, they turn to his birth in Bethlehem. Both are about the same thing: God coming close to people who need him.

Advent is also the busiest month of the year for many people who serve young adults, and many of those leaders are young adults themselves. This guide is for your ministry and for you. Keep it simple. Do less, and do it well.

ADVENT 2026 AT A GLANCE

Nov 29	**First Sunday of Advent**	A new Church year begins. Sunday Gospels this year come mostly from Mark (Year B).
Dec 8	**Immaculate Conception**	Patronal feast of the United States and a holy day of obligation. Falls on a Tuesday this year.
Dec 9	**St. Juan Diego**	The Indigenous visionary of Guadalupe, a lay man in his fifties when Mary called him.
Dec 12	**Our Lady of Guadalupe**	Patroness of the Americas. Many communities keep a vigil, mañanitas, and a dawn Mass.
Dec 13	**Gaudete Sunday**	The Third Sunday. The rose candle is lit: rejoice, the Lord is near.
Dec 16–24	**Las Posadas and Simbang Gabi**	Nine nights of Mexican and Latin American posadas, and nine dawn or evening Masses in Filipino communities.
Dec 17–23	**The "O Antiphons"**	Ancient titles for Christ, prayed at Evening Prayer, that gave us "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."
Dec 24	**Christmas Eve**	Advent ends at evening. Christmas lasts until the Baptism of the Lord, so keep celebrating.

FOUR WEEKS, FOUR INVITATIONS

A path through the Sunday Gospels

Each Sunday's Gospel offers one invitation. Use it for your own prayer, for a team meeting, or for a young adult gathering that week.

1 Stay awake · Mark 13:33–37

Jesus tells his friends to be watchful, because they do not know when the master will return. Young adults are often running on empty. Being awake in Advent isn't about doing more. It is about noticing where God already is. **Ask:** Where have I been on autopilot? **Try:** A daily examen, five minutes before bed.

2 Make a way · Mark 1:1–8

John the Baptist prepares the way in the wilderness, calling people to change their hearts. Every ministry has obstacles that keep young adults from finding their way in. **Ask:** What stands between young adults and our community, and what could we remove? **Try:** Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and offer a communal service with hospitality afterward.

3 Say who you are · John 1:6–8, 19–28

When people ask John, "Who are you?" he answers honestly: not the Messiah, but a voice pointing to him. Many young adults are working out who they are. **Ask:** Who am I, and who am I not? Where is my life pointing? **Try:** On Gaudete Sunday, share one thing that is bringing you joy.

4 Say yes · Luke 1:26–38

Mary, a young woman with an uncertain future, hears God's invitation, asks an honest question, and says yes. **Ask:** What is God inviting me to? What question would I want to ask first? **Try:** Invite one young adult to take on a real role in your ministry in the new year.

A NOTE ON REST

If you lead young adult ministry, December can turn into a string of events, parties, and deadlines. Protect one evening a week for your own prayer and rest. Your team will follow what you model more than what you announce.

FOR YOUR TEAM

A 15-minute Advent huddle

Open each team meeting during Advent this way. It works in person or on a video call, and it gets everyone praying before planning.

0:00	**Light the wreath**	Light the week's candles, or a single candle if you're online. Pause in silence.
0:02	**The Gospel**	One person reads the coming Sunday's Gospel slowly.
0:05	**One word**	Each person says one word or phrase that stood out. No commentary.
0:08	**The question**	Ask the week's question from the previous page. Two or three people respond.
0:13	**Pray together**	Pray the Advent prayer on the last page of this guide, then get to work.

GATHERING IDEAS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Wreath night

Many young adults live alone or with roommates and have never had an Advent wreath. Supply the greens and candles, bless them together, and send everyone home with one.

Walk with a tradition

Join a parish posada, Simbang Gabi, or Guadalupe vigil as guests. Ask young adults from that community to host and explain what it means to them.

O Antiphons evening prayer

Pray Evening Prayer on one night between December 17 and 23. Sing the antiphon of the day and talk about the title of Christ it names.

Serve, then share

Serve a meal, sort gifts, or visit the homebound. Close with fifteen minutes on where you met Christ.

Screen-light Advent

Invite people to set down their phones for one hour a day and share what they noticed. Hold it lightly. The point is attention, not guilt.

Gaudete gathering

Hold a simple, joyful party on the Third Sunday, with rose decorations, music, and good food. Invite people who have been on the edges this year.

PRINTABLE

My Advent plan

Choose one small practice for each week. Write it down, share it with one person, and check in with each other at the end of the week.

WEEK 1 · STAY AWAKE

WEEK 2 · MAKE A WAY

WEEK 3 · SAY WHO YOU ARE

WEEK 4 · SAY YES

I'LL SHARE THIS WITH _____

AN ADVENT PRAYER

Come, Lord Jesus. You know what we are waiting for, and what we are afraid to hope for. Keep us awake to the ways you are already here. Clear a path in us for your coming. Help us say who we are, and say yes to what you ask. Make our community a place where young people find room and rest, like the stable at Bethlehem. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Keep going

These free resources can help young adults pray every day of Advent, alone or together.

U.S. BISHOPS

2026 Advent Calendar

A daily activity and prayer for each day of the season, in English and Spanish, at usccb.org.

BUSTED HALO

Advent Calendar and #InstaAdvent

A short daily reflection with a micro-challenge, and a daily photo prompt to share on social media. Made with young adults in mind.

PRAY AS YOU GO

Advent Psalms

Free weekly audio prayer with the Psalms and an end-of-week examen, from the British Jesuits.

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

Advent Wreath

Weekly prayers that connect each candle with sisters and brothers in need around the world.

FROM NIMYA

Small Group Starter Kit

If Advent gatherings leave people wanting more, this kit helps you start a group for the new year.

FROM NIMYA

Accompaniment Basics

For leaders who want to walk with young adults through seasons of waiting.

Free for your ministry

NIMYA resources are free for everyone who ministers with young adults. Copy them, adapt them for your community, and share them widely. No strings attached.

The National Institute for Ministry with Young Adults forms and accompanies pastoral leaders who minister with young adults in their late teens, twenties, and thirties, through pastoral formation, leader accompaniment, research, and advocacy. Learn more at ministrywithyoungadults.org.