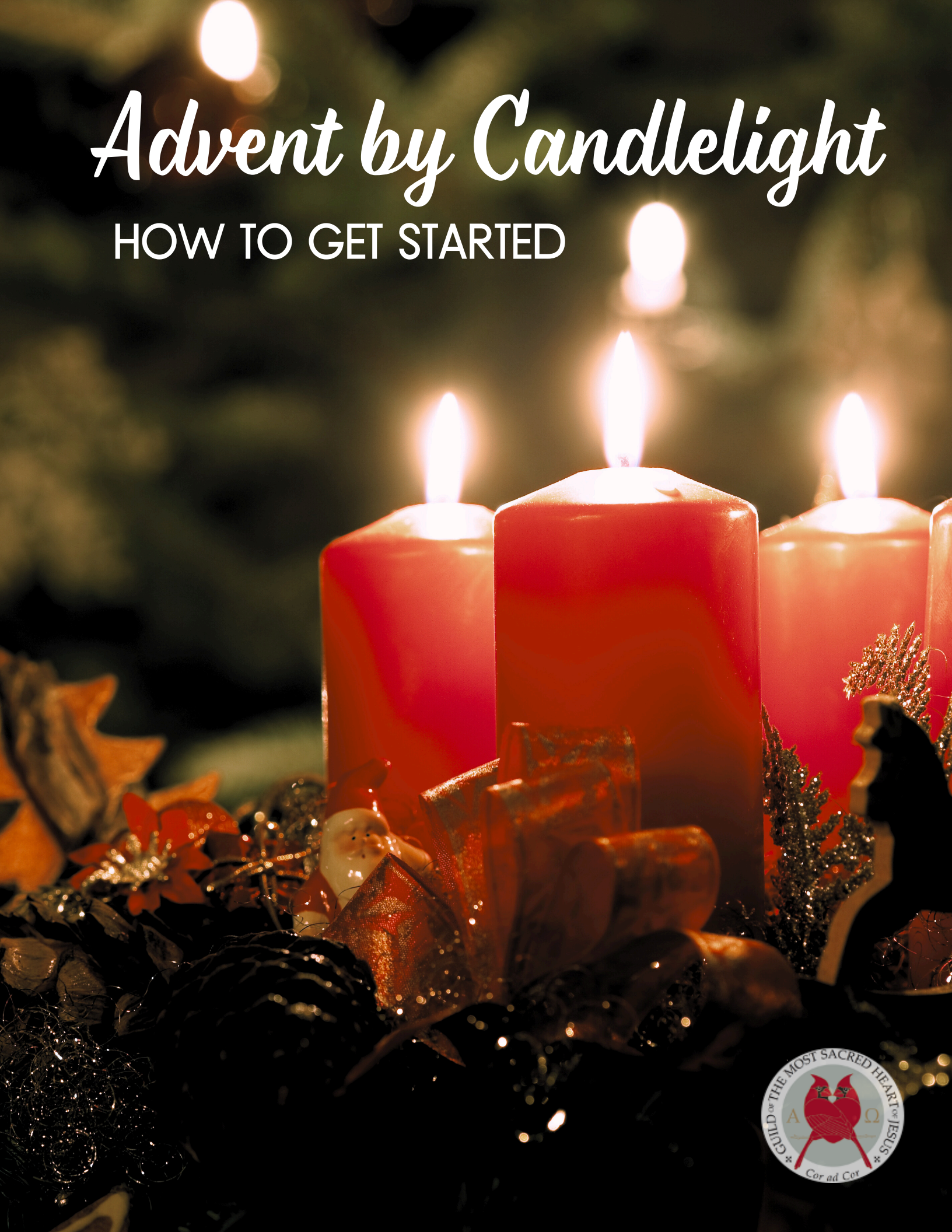


Advent by Candlelight

HOW TO GET STARTED



What is Advent By Candlelight?

Advent-by-Candlelight is a beautiful event that brings women together in a festive spirit of warm faith to focus on the true meaning of this blessed season. It is an evening of food, fellowship, reflection, and prayer. As women, it often feels like every moment of Advent is filled with decorating, baking, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and wrapping gifts in preparation for celebrating Christmas. Like Martha in Luke 10:38-42, we are busy with many things. Our intentions are good, and we try to make Christmas special for our families and friends, but we can become so busy preparing that we miss out on experiencing the beauty and meaning of Advent and Christmas ourselves. An event like Advent-by-Candlelight is an opportunity for women to gather together and focus on Jesus and the real meaning of Christmas. And it all takes place by candlelight — keeping our eyes fixed on Christ as the true light of the season.

How does it work?

The structure varies, but generally, women of the parish are invited to purchase a table and act as hosts, inviting friends (8 to 10 guests per table) to join them. Table hosts create a peaceful atmosphere by uniquely decorating their tables, including four Advent candles, and inviting friends to join them. Guests will listen to an inspirational talk while enjoying a light dinner organized by the table host. On the day of the event, hosts arrive early to decorate their tables. The tables can be as elaborate or simple as desired, from the finest china to paper plates. Each table welcomes guests and reflects the theme of the season. When guests arrive, they usually bring wine, appetizers, and desserts to share. The evening begins with fellowship and an opportunity to tour the tables; then the lights go out, and the program unfolds, including an introduction from the parish priest/pastor, music, and a guest speaker reflecting on the Advent season.

Where: Location

Advent-by-Candlelight events are usually held in the Church's parish hall, fellowship hall, or gymnasium. Consider setting up a *Sample Table* two weeks before the event to inspire hosts. Please keep it simple enough to not intimidate but elegant enough to inspire.

When: Date and Time

For most parishes, it works best to plan an Advent-by-Candlelight event early in December so participants can be encouraged to adopt an attitude of anticipation for the birth of Jesus and, practically speaking, before schedules get overly busy with other holiday parties and events. These events are usually held in the evening, beginning at approximately 6 p.m., and the duration is typically 2 - 3 hours.

Pricing:

Past events across the diocese have charged between \$75 for a table of eight and \$300 for a table of ten. Individual tickets ranged from \$15 to \$30. You may get requests from women who couldn't buy a table but wanted to attend. Consider setting up an "extra" table for singles and charging \$30+ per person. In pricing, consider the speaker's stipend, the cost of items provided (table clothes/coffee/etc.), and whether the event is a fundraiser.



Sample Letter



To our generous table hosts,

Thank you so much for offering your gift of hospitality to create a beautiful and peaceful evening as we enter the Advent season. May Our Blessed Mother be the very heart of our Advent by Candlelight evening on December 6th, at 6 p.m.

Here are some helpful suggestions for the evening.

1. Invite up to nine other friends, family, and coworkers for a beautiful evening of reflection. When you have your list of names and email addresses, please send them to XX at X@aaa.com.
2. The table host creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere by decorating her table. We will provide a white tablecloth for your 60" round table. As host, your decorations and place settings can be as straightforward or as elegant as you wish, from paper plates to fine china and everything in between. Seeing all the different styles and ideas in the decorations is beautiful. During the event, the overhead lights will be turned off, so please include candles for your table in your decorations. Battery-operated votives work well. The Hall will be opened on Saturday morning from ___ to ___ for you to bring your items and to decorate your table.
3. Provide food and drink for the people at your table by organizing and bringing it yourself or by requesting your guests bring items to share. Alcohol is permitted. We will provide coffee and tea. Please bring food that is hot and ready to serve. The kitchen will not be available to reheat food. (*Chafing dishes and crackpots could be allowed depending on parish preferences.*) Additional table space will be available for you.
4. Because the Hall will be used the following day, please take all your decorations, food, and any other items with you at the end of the evening. The kitchen is NOT available for cleanup.
5. If you have any questions, please get in touch with XXX by phone/email.

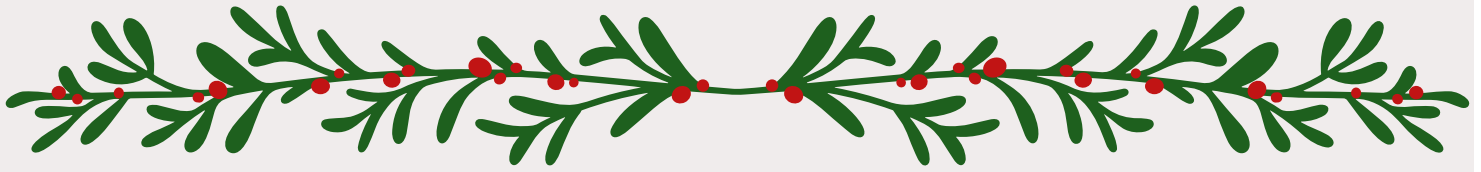
If you still need to pay, please submit a check as soon as possible. Thank you.

We are looking forward to an evening that will open all of your hearts to the season's beauty!

God bless,

Advent By Candlelight team

Sample Letter



To our table host,

Thank you so much for signing up for what promises to be a beautiful evening of Advent preparation. We look forward to being with you. Your efforts will transform the room into a peaceful setting that allows our hearts to make room for the Christ child.

Location and Address of the event:

Here are some details to help the night run smoothly:

Setup:

You may arrive to set your table as early as 3 pm on Thursday, December 5th. You may pull up to unload your car, but we ask that you move your vehicle and park in the main parking lot near the Church.

Table Dimensions:

Round tables (with eight chairs) are 60" in diameter and 29" high. Please bring a tablecloth. Here is a highlight video from a neighboring Fairfield County parish if you need some inspiration to decorate your table: <https://youtu.be/Gu2bGk9mJbU>

Table Numbers:

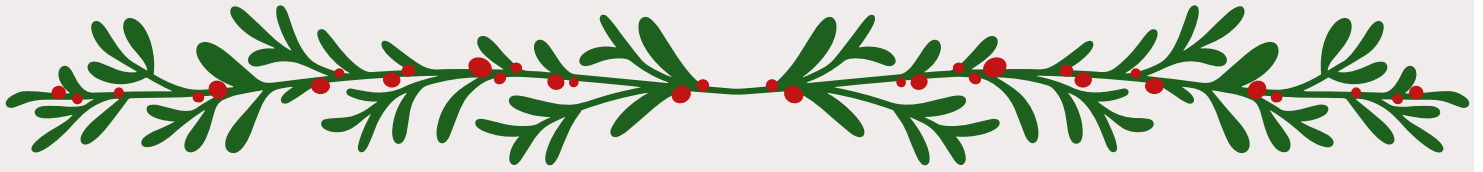
We will send you, via email, your table number by December 1st. Numbers will be prominently displayed on each table when you arrive for set-up. Please put your table number back once you have finished setting your table. Be sure to tell your guests your table number in advance. We will have a list at the door for anyone who needs assistance.

Setting Your Tables / Four Advent Candles:

You may choose to make place cards for your table. The room will be lit by candlelight, so we ask each host to bring four candles to add to the ambiance. We will be lighting all four Advent Candles for this event even though we are only in the first week.

That evening, please wait to light your candles until we ask you to do so from the podium. Consider bringing extra tea lights for your table in addition to the four Advent candles to brighten your table for your guests. *Remember to bring a lighter for your candles.*

Sample Letter cont.



Provided Beverage:

We will have hot water and coffee (decaf and regular). Please supply your favorite collection of teabags. You can handle the hot beverages in one of two ways:

- Have your guests bring their cups up to the serving table to prepare their drink (sugar, cream, lemons, and honey will all be available there) or
- Bring a teapot or carafe to transfer the beverages and serve your guests from your table.

Please note: We will not be providing cups.

You may also bring a bottle of wine or champagne to share with your guests. Some ladies requested this lovely touch to enjoy sharing with their friends. It is up to you. Remember to bring your corkscrew!

Your table should operate independently:

In other words, please provide a light dinner, dessert, and all the fixings for you and your table of guests, such as teabags, serving utensils, plates, cups, utensils, and water glasses. Everything should be kept on or under your table, so keeping it simple is a good idea. Be sure to mark any containers, bags, or boxes with your name.

Please plan to bring home dirty dishes if you are using something other than disposable ones.

Evening Arrival:

Please encourage your guests to arrive by 6:35 p.m. so that our program can begin on time at 6:45 p.m. Please advise your guests to park in the main parking lot.

A finishing touch:

Think of this as an Advent present to your guests. If you are sending them home with a favor, let it be a reminder of the true gift of the invitation and service you extended to them on this beautiful night of faith. Or simply enjoy serving them their beverages and food! Advent by Candlelight is a perfect opportunity for us to live out Christ's charity.

Thank you,

The Advent by Candlelight Team

Sample Flier

Advent by Candlelight

An Evening of Reflection for Women



Join us for a beautiful event that brings women together in a festive spirit of warm faith to focus on the true meaning of this blessed season. It is an evening of food, fellowship, reflection, and prayer. Table hosts create a warm welcome by decorating their table and coordinating a shared meal with their guests.

Thursday, December 5th, 6:30 PM

St. Mary Church Hall

Candlelit dinner

with Guest Speaker Jane Doe

**Gather your friends and family and
host a table for up to 10 guests for \$300.**

To sponsor a table, please contact Mary Smith at msmith@xx.com.

Payment can be made at the church office.



St. Mary Church, Street, Town, Zip website



We extend our sincere thanks
to the women of Saint Thomas More Church
and the Georgetown Oratory
for their invaluable input,
which has greatly enriched this guide.

The Guild of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
Georgetown, CT
jesusguild.com