

Everything in the liturgy pivots around Christ, the Incarnate Word. In the course of the year's cycle, all the mysteries of Christ - the Incarnation, Redemption, Resurrection, Ascension - and all the virtues of which He is the most excellent Exemplar are set out for our inspiration and emulation. Now that we are in Advent, the beginning of the liturgical year, we have a perfect opportunity to intensify and enliven the process of our sanctification by taking an active part in the liturgy.

Nobody knows exactly how Advent started, but the custom is very ancient. In his HISTORY OF THE FRANKS, St. Gregory of Tours wrote that one of his predecessors, St. Perpetuus, who held the See around 480, decreed a fast three times a week from the feast of St. Martin, November 11, until Christmas. In 567, the Second Council of Tours enjoined monks to fast from the beginning of December until Christmas. This penance was soon extended to the laity and was pushed back to begin on St. Martin's Day. This forty-day Advent was nicknamed "St. Martin's Lent." From France the practice of doing penance during Advent spread to England as is noted in Venerable Bede's History. Today, the fast is not binding on the laity, and the duration of Advent has been reduced from forty days to four weeks.

For us, Advent begins on the Sunday nearest St. Andrew's Day, November 30. The modern church no longer insists on any formal fasting or abstaining, nor does it promote the spirit of penance. However, any Catholic, worthy of the name, should maintain the spirit of penance during Advent in its original observance.

The GLORIA is not said in the Masses of this season because it is not yet time for those wondrous words which the Angels will sing out at Bethlehem. Purple is the proper color of the season for the vestments and in some areas it once was the custom to wear black. The organ is not to be played except midway through Advent on Gaudete Sunday.

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All honor praise and glory

to the LITTLE LAMB of Bethlehem,

Who is the ROOT OF DAVID,

the HEAD of the Church,

the MASTER AND CENTRAL FIGURE of history,

the RULER over the kings of the earth,

the KING of ALL KINGS and the

VICTOR over all evil powers, and

WHO has been shaping the destiny of this world

in His own Mysterious Manner

since

HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH ON THE CROSS!