

# Key Information for Pupils

Framework code A1-1.1



Advent is the time of waiting before Christmas. Advent lasts for four weeks, beginning four Sundays before Christmas.

This year, Advent begins on the 1st of December 2013.

The word "Advent" means 'coming' or 'arrival'. During Advent we thank God for coming into our world as Jesus and for what Jesus' life brings to us. Advent gives us time to get ready for Jesus so that our lives can reflect the love and joy that we feel at Christmas.

The special, liturgical colour for Advent is purple. This is the colour associated with penance (being sorry for wrong choices). However, because Advent is a time of joyful waiting, more recently churches have stopped using a very dark purple (which is a bit more serious) – instead, churches now use a lighter shade of violet (which is more joyful).

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Symbols are an important part of Advent: we learned about the Advent wreath last year.

The Jesse Tree is another symbol associated with Advent – we will learn about the Jesse Tree this year.

Prayer is also an important part of Advent. The Readings used during the four Sundays of Advent introduce us to people who prepared for the birth of Jesus: people like John the Baptist and Mary.

We also prepare by praying special prayers, among them the 'O' antiphons. We will learn about the 'O' antiphons soon.

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Framework code A1-1.3



An 'antiphon' is a verse sung before or after a Psalm or reading.

The 'O' Antiphons are short prayers sung as part of the evening prayer of the prayers (called Liturgy of the Hours) that priests, members of religious communities and others use each day of the year.

The 'O' antiphons get their name from the first word in each one, 'O'.

There are seven 'O' Antiphons; a different one is said for each of the seven days before the 24<sup>th</sup> of December.

During Advent, the 'O' Antiphons are sung before and after the Magnificat.

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During Vatican II Pope Paul VI asked his Biblical Commission to explain why there are differences in the four Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus.

The commission said that each Gospel writer tells a different story because they each had different audiences to write for. Some writers took out stories, or changed them; sometimes stories were put into a different order. Depending on the audience, different parts of the story were useful. The important thing is to work out the message that each Gospel writer is trying to give. The message is usually the same.

So, although Luke and Matthew record the birth of Jesus very differently, the truth they are trying to convey is the same: Jesus was the messiah – he was God in human form.