

The word Advent means “coming” and it is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas, but it also invites us to prepare for Jesus to come at the end of time, so it is a reflective period for some serious thinking about our future – our ultimate future! During Advent the Church uses the sombre colour purple for vestments and hangings, and the readings from scripture and the music and prayers all have a tone of waiting in anticipation. At this dark time of the year the theme of light is significant as the church waits for Christ – the “Light of the World”.

The third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday and I invite you to come and bring your baby Jesus crib piece to mass to be blessed.

The Tradition of Blessing the Bambinelli



The beautiful Advent Tradition, **Bambinelli Sunday**, was instituted by Saint Pope John Paul II during his Papacy. The tradition follows that on the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) children and adults bring their Baby Jesus figures from their homes to St Peters Square where they are blessed by the Pope.

All children and families are invited to bring the Baby Jesus figure from their homes to be blessed. Families can make their own **Bambinelli** if they wish.

Pope Francis has continued the tradition, blessing the statuettes which children bring before him in the Square. Parishes around the world now join in the celebration to help children and young people to prepare for Jesus.

A suggestion is, following the blessing prayer, you wrap your **Bambinelli** and place it with the gifts under your Christmas tree. Open it as a family on Christmas morning where the youngest member of the family can place it in the crib. **A gift of the presence of Christ, then, will be in your home this Christmas.**

Here is a prayer you may like to use to ask God's blessing

*God, our Father you so loved mankind
that you sent us your only Son Jesus,
born of the Virgin Mary,
to save us and lead us back to you.*

*We pray that, with your Blessing,
these images of Jesus who is about to come among us,
may be a sign of your presence and love in our homes.*

*Father, give your Blessing to us too,
to our parents, to our families and to our friends.*

*Open our hearts so that we may be able to
receive Jesus in joy, always do what he asks
and see him in all those who are in need of our love.*

*We ask you this in the name of Jesus
your beloved Son who comes to give the world peace.*

He lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

