

Take the Catholic Sistas

Shop 'til You Drop on Your Knees and Pray Challenge!

::this challenge is designed to give you a more peaceful Advent::

SIX SUNDAYS BEFORE ADVENT

___ **Write down all the names of people you plan to give gifts** {parents, grandparents, spouse, children, godchildren, co-workers, teachers, RE instructors, youth directors, priests, etc.} Set aside 15-20 minutes of uninterrupted time to make sure you remember everyone. Even if your plan is to gift someone a donation to a charity in their name or a spiritual bouquet or have a Mass said for them, make sure you write their names down. You can even purchase the Catholic Through The Year **HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT** bundle, which includes a gift guide {it also includes birthdays and anniversaries for easy tracking}. Don't forget stocking stuffers and St. Nicholas Day goodies!

___ **Look at special Church days during Advent.** Do you celebrate feast days like the Immaculate Conception, St. Nicholas, St. Lucy, Our Lady of Guadalupe? What about the O Antiphons? Whatever days you celebrate, make sure you have what you need for those days, whether it's food, gifts, special books set aside. Make sure you use a good Catholic planner with those details included. I'd love to recommend the **CATHOLIC THROUGH THE YEAR CALENDAR**, which is available as both a PDF download or hard copy, your choice, and starts with the first Sunday of Advent.

___ **Set your spending limit** - start with your total allotted budget for Christmas, and then break it down for each person.

___ **What are your storage solutions?** Where will you store your gifts? Years ago, I invested in a storage system that I could lock up. It's kept in the garage and my kids know if they jailbreak their gifts, they will be returned to the store, and momma won't lose any sleep over that decision. Think about where you can store your gifts.

FIVE SUNDAYS BEFORE ADVENT

___ **Gather addresses for the people you'll be mailing gifts.** Double check they are current. This will be doubly helpful if you send out Christmas cards.

___ **Brainstorm and jot down a couple of gift ideas for each person.** You can start your search by looking at our previous Christmas Gift Guides **HERE** and **HERE**, as well as check out our **CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEA** board on Pinterest.

___ **Visit your favorite websites and sign up for alerts.** Then you'll know when specials and free shipping pop up. Jot these down on the calendar. Don't have a calendar? Here's a **GREAT ONE** you'll love – and you support Catholic Sistas with this purchase!

FOUR SUNDAYS BEFORE ADVENT

___ **Take inventory of your gift supplies.** Do you have enough wrapping paper? How about dedicated scissors and tape? What about tags? Go through your Gift wrapping caddy {if you have one} and clean it out. Are you a gift bagger? What's your bag and tissue paper supply like? Markers for jotting down names? Make sure you stock up!

___ **Double check ship time to each location that gifts will be mailed.** Are you subscribed to a service like **AMAZON PRIME** ? Services like these can be a real life saver, especially if you are watching shipping cost pennies, or if you're like me and don't particularly appreciate the whole spend \$25 to get free shipping from Amazon. Sometimes a girl just forgets that one item and doesn't want to blow the budget on straggler items to get free shipping. It's not free anymore. So, sign up. It's well worth the investment.

___ **Block off time to shop.** Whether it's online or locally, make sure you have dedicated time to knock out your list.

THREE SUNDAYS BEFORE ADVENT

___ **Make final decisions on gifts.** Make sure you have stayed within your budget.

___ **Start ordering/shopping for gifts.** If you are ordering from Prime, you can add in gift wrap options or just ask the receiving party to wrap their own gift...if you can get away with that. ☐

___ **For kiddos with teachers, check to see what the last class dates are before the break** – this goes for RE/CCD/Faith Formation teachers, youth directors, etc. When is the last RE class before the Christmas break? Jot those dates down in your calendar. Teachers get a TON of gifts, so consider giving them something that is consumable like a nice candle, a small package of sweets, or a \$5 gift card to a local coffee place. This is a trade secret, but I like to shop at places like Marshall's, Steinmart, or Tuesday Morning for those cute gifts that don't break the bank.

___ **Check your Advent candles!** Are they in need of replacing? This is when stores start running out of pinks and purples. Go get your candles...NOW.

TWO SUNDAYS BEFORE ADVENT

___ **Label gifts as they arrive.** Before you put them into hiding, make sure you open each package, making sure your order is complete and to your satisfaction. Then, grab a sticky notepad and pencil or pen and write down the person's name with the gift.

___ **Finish all shopping.** Give yourself a high five. No, seriously.

ONE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT

___ **Take out your Advent decor and pick up a new tradition this season.** Feel free to peruse our **ADVENT** archives of the blog to help you out. One tradition we've done over the years is to wrap our Advent and Christmas books in tissue paper and set them out in a basket. Each kiddo gets to pick after evening prayers and we read it. Do you have a tradition to share? Feel free to leave a comment and share with us!

___ **Wrap gifts.** Whether you work alone or you and your spouse like to tackle gifts together, carve out some time to wrap gifts, right down to the name tags.

___ **Consider joining the Catholic Sistas Advent Instagram Photo Journey.** On Instagram for a few years now, we have encouraged our Instagram followers to participate in both our Lenten and Advent photo journey. While fun on the surface, the photos and the daily themes have the power to challenge and call each to a deeper walk through these liturgical seasons. If you are someone who likes to take pictures, daily prompts to help you grow in the Faith during Advent, and like accountability, consider participating in our photo journey. **HERE** is a link to last year's challenge.

STYLE POINTS

Style points are extras you can choose to do, which will add to a more peaceful Advent, but aren't tied to shopping. You can place them on any week you'd like. They are:

1. **Make your plans for Christmas.** Are you staying at home or traveling this year? Will you be cooking a full meal or asking others to bring something to share? Decide what you'll be cooking and put your grocery list together now for the week you'll need it. Buy food items that are popular for Thanksgiving and Christmas at the same time so you won't risk bare shelves later.
2. **Christmas cards.** Have you bought your cards yet? What about stamps? Do you have your entire mailing list ready and current? Do you struggle to get cards out before Christmas? Why not try sending out a year in review that goes out during the Christmas season? What about a letter that goes out near the Epiphany? The advantage to this is you can purchase Christmas cards when they go on clearance.

3. **Family pictures.** If you are doing family pictures, the sooner you do it the better to avoid the store order madness.

*URLs used throughout

Household management - <http://www.catholicsistas.com/store/household-management/>

Catholic Through The Year Calendar - <http://www.catholicsistas.com/store/calendar/>

Here {1st} - <http://www.catholicsistas.com/2014/11/18/official-2014-catholic-christmas-gift-guide-giveaway/>

Here {2nd} - <http://www.catholicsistas.com/2014/11/18/official-2014-catholic-christmas-gift-guide-giveaway/>

Christmas Gift Idea Pinterest board - <https://www.pinterest.com/catholicsistas/christmas-gift-guide/>

Great one - <http://www.catholicsistas.com/store/calendar/>

Amazon Prime - <http://www.amazon.com>

Advent - <http://www.catholicsistas.com/category/liturgical-year/advent/>

Here {3rd} - <http://www.catholicsistas.com/2014/11/28/csadvent-ready-instagram-photo-challenge/>