



## *An Advent Alphabet for Orthodox Families*

Dear Parents,

We invite you to share in *An Advent Alphabet for Orthodox Families* with your children (Second Grade and higher). Attached are five pages of Text and Bible Verse References that offer "hints" for the "**word of the day.**"

All you need for this *Family Activity* are:

1. These sheets
2. A Bible - the *Orthodox Study Bible* offers great footnotes, and a *King James Version* is need for 3 days in particular
3. 10-15 minutes each day, perhaps before or after dinner, or before bedtime. Maybe prayers can be added if you do not already do so

This begins on **November 28** even though the **Nativity Fast begins on November 15.**

While our children may be provided with many Christmas activities between now and Christmas in their Public School environment, most of these will be of a secular nature. We feel that this Advent Activity, with its focus on the story of the birth of Christ, will serve as a daily reminder of the religious meaning of Christmas, and familiarize our children with the story of the Nativity of Our Lord.

As we tell the Nativity story there are words that are unfamiliar to our children because they speak of a time and place removed from our daily experiences. We hope that retelling the story will provide definition and visual examples that will help make the story more meaningful. In addition, this *Alphabet-Calendar* helps our children count down the days until Christmas in a spiritual way.

We wish you and your family all the joy and promise that this holiday offers, and we hope that sharing in this project brings us all closer to each other and to the meaning of Christ's birth.

*Sunday Church School Directors and Staff*

# An Advent Alphabet for Orthodox Families

Adapted by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.

Although this activity covers only the last 26 days of the Nativity Fast, it's a great way to focus on *"the Reason for the Season."*



**DIRECTIONS:** On the calendar below, each day corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. Each day is given a letter, the Scripture reference(s) and specific clues.

The task is to find the word of the day that starts with that day's letter. The word will always be in the Scripture reference.

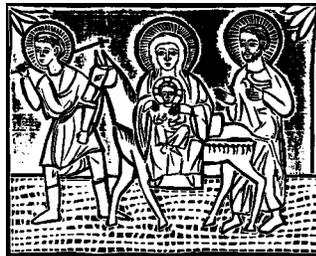
The *Orthodox Study Bible* [NKJV] and the Revised Standard Version [RSV] are suitable for most days, but you will need to use the King James Version [KJV] for December 17, 21, 22.  
**26 letters, 26 days, 26 words!**



A (Luke 1:26)

**November 28**

This word identifies one of the first persons to have anything to do with the Christmas story. This person announced to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus. We are announcing the coming of Jesus in the days ahead. We are awaiting the celebration of His birthday. God used Gabriel to bring the Good News. He can use you to tell others the Good News of Jesus. Today's word is \_\_\_\_\_. Tomorrow, ask someone if he/she knows what Gabriel brought? (Good News)



B (Luke 2:10;

Revelation 3:20)

**November 29:**

Knock! Knock!

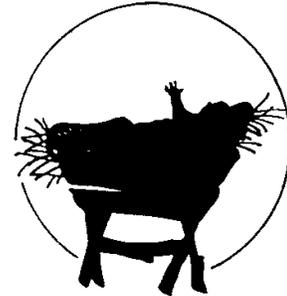
Who's there?

Atch!

Atch who?

Bless you!

Today's word means "Hey! Pay attention." The angels used the word to get the shepherds to listen and then Jesus used it to get our attention. He wants to be part of our life. But we have to ask Him in. The word is \_\_\_\_\_.



C (Matthew 2:9)

**November 30**

Today's word describes a kind of person. Have you ever wondered why Jesus did not come as an old man? What do you think? What is there about babies that people like? Everything! They don't hurt anyone, you can identify with them (because you've been a baby yourself), and they are a sign of love. God didn't want to come and force His way into our lives. He wanted to be loved and accepted as we are loved and accepted in our family. That's why He came as a \_\_\_\_\_.

D (Matthew 1:2, 2:12; 2:22)

**December 1**

Today's word is something we've all had. In fact, the poem that begins, "Twas the night before Christmas," includes this word. This word usually happens while you sleep. Sometimes it is good, and sometimes it can be frightening. In our Scripture verses, this word was good. God used it as a way to warn

people about danger. If you do this during the day, people think you're lazy. At night it's okay as long as you don't get scared. Tell one another about your last one. The word is \_\_\_\_\_.



E (Matthew 1:23 (spelled with an "I" in the NKJV))

**December 2**

The word for today is very special. The verse says it means "God-with-us." God came to visit us in person. God was no longer far away. God was right here with us. The people could see, touch, hear, talk, and walk with God who became a human being like us. That is what makes Christmas extra-special. God is with us. Today's word is \_\_\_\_\_.

F (Matthew 1:22)

**December 3**

Today's word has to do with a message the prophet Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 7:14). He said these words 750 years before Jesus was born. Our word today means that the words Isaiah said were coming true. If you take a cup and you put water in it till it is all the way to the top, you have filled it full. Nothing else can be put in. That's what Matthew was

saying. The words of Isaiah were filled full or \_\_\_\_\_. They came true with Jesus.

G (Luke 2:20)

**December 4**

Our word today suggests a way we can express God's greatness. The shepherds did this at that first Christmas. It means to make someone (God) feel important. Do you do that? Do you make God feel important? If we ignore God's laws and commands, God wonders if we really do care for Him. The best way you can show God your love is to believe in Jesus. The is the way to \_\_\_\_\_ God.



H (Matthew 2:16)

**December 5**

Our word today is a man - a man who did a very bad thing. He wanted to get rid of Jesus so much that he had all the children in Bethlehem who were two years old and younger killed. That was terrible! Can you think of any ways that we try to get rid of Jesus today? Every time we do something that Jesus would not want us to do, we are putting Him out of our lives. Let's do our best not to be like the evil man \_\_\_\_\_.

I (Matthew 2:21)

**December 6**

The word for today is the name of a special people / land / nation. They had their beginning a long time before Jesus came. God had promised these people that one day there would be a special person to save them. Jesus loved this special people and He is the one we call Savior. Today's word is \_\_\_\_\_.

J (Matthew 1:21)

**December 7**

Our word today is someone's name. His name in Hebrew is the same as that of an Old Testament person, Joshua. The name means "Savior." What does Savior mean? If you were swimming and you started to drown, the lifeguard who saves you would be your savior. Our sins would keep us from reaching God, but this person is able to make a bridge for us. This person is \_\_\_\_\_. He is the one whose birthday we are going to celebrate soon.



K (Matthew 2:2,3)

**December 8**

Our word for this day is found several times in the Christmas story. It is used to describe a number of special

people in history. One was mean and ordered babies killed. Three of them were wise. The Bible does not call them by today's word, but a song about them does. David, of the Old Testament, was one of these, too. And one of David's descendants would come to rule the heart, not the government. Someone who rules and wears a crown is called a \_\_\_\_\_.



L (Matthew 2:9 [not in NKJV])

**December 9**

Here are some other words you might want to use in place of today's two-letter word: "Sure enough," "before you know it," "to their amazement"...(you think of others). Our simple little two-letter word is used to express wonder or surprise. Think how excited you would have been if you had seen that star moving or had seen the angel of God appear.

Jesus used this little word another time to help us remember that He is with us (Matthew 28:20). That is exciting! Our word is \_\_\_\_\_.

M (Matthew 2:11)

**December 10**

Our word today rhymes with purr, fur, her, and sir. It was one of the gifts given to Jesus by the Wise Men. Have you

ever wondered what, exactly, this gift was? It was a very expensive, nice-smelling perfume used for many different purposes. Jesus was offered this again later in life (Mark 15:23). See if you can discover when and where that time was. Our word for today is \_\_\_\_\_. Have you given Jesus the gift He really wants for Christmas?

N (Matthew 2:14)

**December 11**

Today's word is about the dark part of the day, the time when we sleep. In our verse we read that Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled into Egypt. They did not want to be seen, so they traveled in the dark. It was also dark when the angels came to the shepherds. Can you think of other Bible stories when nice things happened in the dark? (Nicodemus)

Why are some people afraid of the dark? Look at the stars and the moon. God has done some of His greatest work for that time. And it makes a great time to sleep. Yawn! Good \_\_\_\_\_.



O (John 3:16)

**December 12**

Our verse is not found in the Christmas story, but it tells the Christmas story. It tells us how special Jesus was. God had no other Son but Jesus. When God sent Jesus, and Jesus died, God gave us a lot. God gave Jesus to the world to save it. There was one Jesus, and no one can ever do what He did again! He was the one and \_\_\_\_\_ Son of God.

P (Luke 2:19)

**December 13**

The word for today means "to think about." The verse says Mary kept all the things that were happening to Jesus in her mind and thought about them. Does someone have a baby book that tells about your early days on this earth? See if you can look at it. In that baby book are some of the things your family thought about as you grew up.

Mary knew Jesus was special. She also knew that there would be a time when He would show everyone how special He was. But the time was not yet. She would have to wait and think. She \_\_\_\_\_ these things in her heart.

Q (Luke 2:46)

**December 14**

For today's word we move ahead to when Jesus was twelve years old. He was sitting in the Temple asking today's word. He was also listening to the teachers, and they were amazed at His understanding.

What do you think Jesus was asking these men? Where did all this happen? Was Jesus standing or sitting? How many days had Jesus been missing? All of these are not answers but \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have any to ask your parents?



R (Matthew 1:5)

**December 15**

Today's word is another person. She was married to Boaz, and they had a son named Obed. As you can see in this Scripture verse, she would have been the great-grandmother of David. We wonder if this woman ever thought that she would be related to the Son of God - Jesus. This part of the Bible lists the family tree of Jesus. He had a lot of important people as His relatives. Some followed God, and some didn't.

Tonight would be a good time to take a sheet of paper, draw a tree with many branches, and recall your family's history. Find out about some of your cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Who knows, you may have a \_\_\_\_\_ in your family.

S (Matthew 2:2)

**December 16**

Twinkle, Twinkle, little \_\_\_\_\_,

How I wonder what you are. Our word today was something that was seen by the Wise Men. They followed it to Jesus. Do you think the Wise Men said the little poem printed above? For sure they wondered what that was in the sky. God has all kinds of ways to lead us today. It might be your parents telling you. It could be your priest or teacher. Sometimes good friends can give us the right answers. God uses them all. He also uses the Bible and prayer. The next time you look at the sky at night and see a \_\_\_\_\_ twinkling, think of God and the different ways God guides our lives.



T (Luke 2:10 (KJV and NKJV))

**December 17**

Here's a word for you today! It may sound like a laundry detergent. Today's word means "news," and the verse says "good news." And the great thing about this "good news" is that it can make us clean and new and fresh. It is the good news that Jesus has come. Today's word is \_\_\_\_\_.

U (Matthew 1:23)

**December 18**

This word is short. This word

is you and me together. It really tells for whom the Gospel was given. Of course, Jesus came for "them," and he came for "those." He came for "others," and He came for "all." But in all of this we must remember the He came for "you" and "me"; for \_\_\_\_\_. Did you notice that the last two letters in the name of Jesus spell our word for today? How about that!

V (Luke 1:27)

**December 19**

(Note to parents: Please interpret this passage in a way that is comfortable to you. Some children may not be ready for this concept.) Today's word is a hard one to understand, but it is very important to the Christmas story, for it describes Mary. Mary was going to have a baby, but God would be the father. Joseph took care of Jesus, but God was the true father. It had to be that way for Jesus to be the special person He was. This special birth makes the story of Christmas mean so much more. Today's word is \_\_\_\_\_.



W (Matthew 2:11)

**December 20**

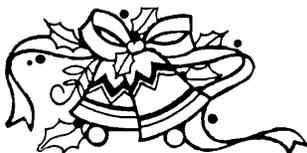
This word describes something

we do every Sunday and other days at the Divine Liturgy. It really is a way of showing how important God is. The verse says the Wise Men did this. As soon as they had come into the house, they dropped to their knees and let Jesus know He was special. Do you ever do that? Do you take time to tell God that you really think He is someone special? For sure you enjoy it when your parents tell you that you're important to them. God has done so much for us; we need to let God know how we feel. In Liturgy and at other times we tell God how special He is to us; we \_\_\_\_\_.

X (Luke 2:1-5 (only in KJV))

**December 21**

Today's word has the letter "x" in it. It does not start with "x." How many times can you find it in the verses?  
Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be registered and counted. As they went through the long line, nobody thought this couple was very important. But surprise! Surprise! You can't tell by looking at people just how important they are. That could be true of some people you know. They may not look and act like you, but God still thinks they are important. In God's record book we all count. Today's word is \_\_\_\_\_.



Y (Luke 2:12 (only in KJV))

**December 22**

Not a tree and not a knee; not a boat upon a sea.  
Not even an iced cold glass of  
This word tells the world, this word tells me.  
That Jesus was sent for people like thee.  
Though only two letters it has, you see.  
Those two letters can important be.  
Those two letters, not one, not three,  
Say that God loves the world and especially \_\_\_\_\_.

Z (Luke 1:5)

**December 23**

Today's word is a man. He was the father of John the Baptist. He was a priest. And he was unable to speak for nine months. Why? Because he did not believe God when he found out that he was to be a father. If we could not talk every time we doubted God, there would be a lot of quiet people around. Could you be quiet for nine months? nine weeks? nine days? nine hours? nine minutes? nine seconds? nine eye blinks? Spend some time this evening quietly watching the Christmas tree and thinking about God's promise of Jesus. We don't have to doubt it because His promise is here. Today's word is \_\_\_\_\_.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M  
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

**December 24:** Can you list all the words of the "Advent Alphabet" by memory?



**CHRIST IS BORN!  
GLORIFY HIM!**

**ANSWERS:** Angel, Behold, Child, Dream, Emmanuel, Fulfilled, Glorify, Herod, Israel, Jesus, King, Lo, Myrrh, Night, Only, Pondered, Questions, Ruth, Star, Tidings, Us, Virgin, Worship, Taxed, Ye, Zacharias.

"Advent Alphabet" first appeared in *Church Teachers* magazine [Sept./Oct. 1982] and was reprinted in *Newsletter*, [Vol. VIII, No.1, Fall/Winter 1983-84] published by the "Committee On Religious Education" of the Romanian Episcopate [OCA].  
Reformatted by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div, Director of Religious Education, Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh, 174 St. Clair Drive, Akron, OH 44307, [pmonest@neo.rr.com](mailto:pmonest@neo.rr.com)  
Originally published under the title "Families Can Enjoy an Advent Alphabet!" in *ORTHODOX FAMILY LIFE*, Winter 1996, Vol. 2, Issue 2.