

*Advent: Its History, conclusion*

December 23, 2018

There have been certain modifications to the liturgy over the centuries. Saint Gregory the Great (died 604) seems to have been the first to draw up an office for this season and, according to the Sacramentaries, there are five Sundays of Advent. St Gregory fixed the liturgy in the West for this Lent-like season, and sanctioned the fast, to which he granted a certain latitude to the different churches as to how it was to be observed. Concerning the five Sundays of Advent in the Gregorian Sacramentary, the Sunday nearest Christmas was counted as the first and what we would call the first, was called the Fifth Sunday. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the five Sunday's were reduced to four. This is the way Advent has been followed ever since, so that the present arrangement of Advent goes back 1,000 years, at least as far as the Church of Rome is concerned. The Ambrosian liturgy still has six weeks of Advent; this is also found in the Gothic and Mozarabic missals. The Greeks have no proper office for Advent; there are only allusions to the coming of the Savior in the feasts of the saints which are celebrated during the period, which begins November 14<sup>th</sup>, and on the Sundays nearest Christmas.

Advent is a time of preparation for our Lord's coming into this world, and more importantly, into our hearts now. Though changes have been made to the practices of Advent throughout the history of the Church, one thing that is important to keep in mind is that nothing prepares us better to receive our Lord than prayer and fasting. We do this more intensely during Lent, but we should strive to have this penitential spirit during Advent also.

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