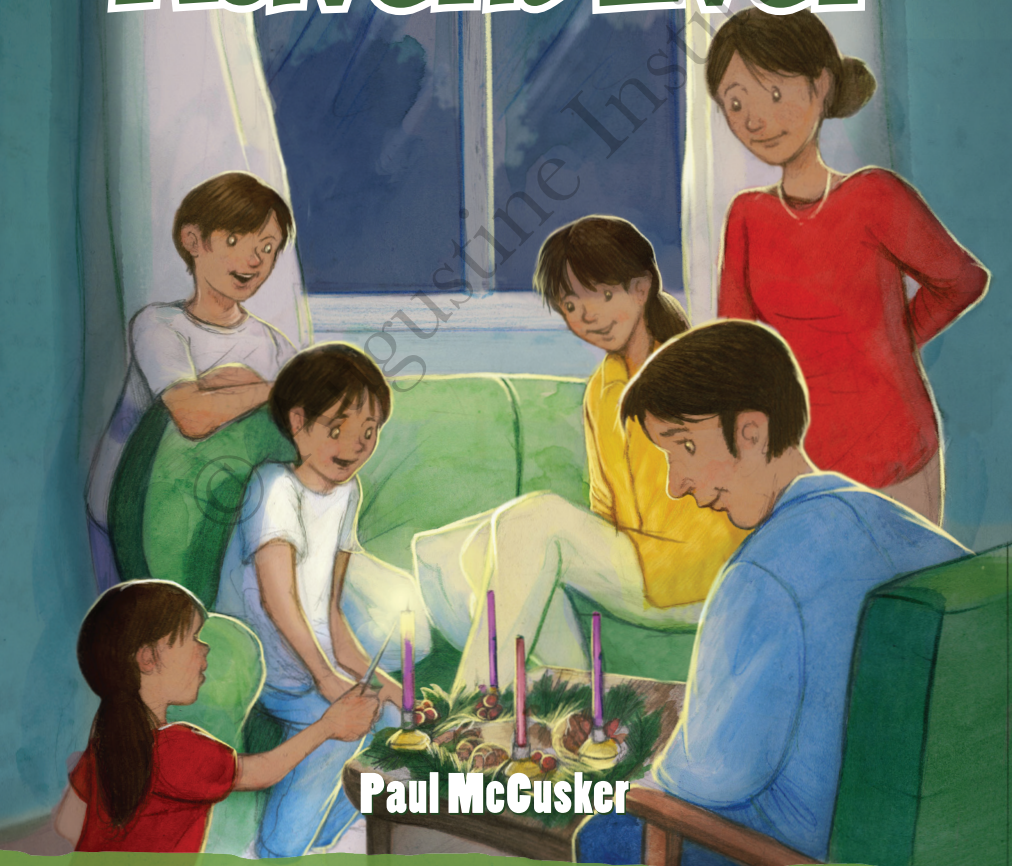


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THE ADVENTURES OF  
**NICK & SAM**

# The Best Advent Ever



**Paul McCusker**



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# **The Best Advent Ever**

by  
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# Contents



Introduction	5
1. Saint Andrew's Day	7
2. Christmas Boxes	15
3. The First Sunday of Advent	25
4. Candles and Calendars	35
5. To Be or Not to Be ... Mary	53
6. What to Do?	63
7. Choices	69
8. A Special Day for Mary	83
9. Rehearsal	93
10. Festivities	101
11. In Town	109
12. A Gaudete Adventure	121
13. Call of the Wild	145

14. The Faded Flower	155
15. Surprises	169
16. Hard	189
17. Bad News	195
18. Christmas Eve	215

## Introduction



Nicholas and Samantha Perry are twins. Nicholas is usually called Nick and Samantha is called Sam. They are both eight years old. They have a ten-year-old sister named Lizzy. Lizzy is short for Elizabeth. They also have a twelve-year-old brother named Andrew. Their parents are named Jon and Belle.

Nick and Sam have a good friend named Brad Wilkes. Brad comes to their house to play. He sometimes leads Nick and Sam into trouble.

Early last summer the Perry family moved from Denver to a town called Hope Springs. Hope Springs is near the

Rocky Mountains in Colorado. It is a town that has a lot of fun things to do.

Nick and Sam like Hope Springs. They visited relatives there when they were growing up. Their parish is called St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church. Nick and Sam attend the parish school next door. Father Cliff Montgomery is the new pastor at St. Clare's. He is young and full of energy. Sam says he is handsome. Nick says he is smart. Dad says he looks too young to be a pastor.

Deacon Chuck Crosby is older and helps Father Cliff a lot. Norm Sullivan is the handyman for the church and the adjoining school. He is friendly and has an unusual way of thinking about things.

Our stories tell about Nick's and Sam's life in Hope Springs. Maybe theirs is a lot like yours.



## CHAPTER ONE



### **Saint Andrew's Day**

“Did you do your homework?” Sister Lucy asked her third-grade class.

Nick and Sam sat a row of desks apart. They looked at one another.

“The reading about Saint Andrew,” Sister Lucy said to remind the class.

Nick sat up in his chair. He had read all about Saint Andrew the night before. “Today is Saint Andrew’s feast day!” Nick called out.

“That’s right,” said Sister Lucy. “But

you should have raised your hand first.”

“Oh, yeah,” Nick said.

“What can you tell me about Saint Andrew?” Sister Lucy asked the class.

Sam raised her hand.

Sister Lucy pointed to her.

“My older brother is named after Saint Andrew,” she said.

Some of their classmates giggled.

“That’s good to know,” Sister Lucy said. “What else?”

Another hand shot up. Sam’s friend named Kim said, “He was the first disciple of Jesus.”

“That’s right,” Sister Lucy said. She pointed to another upraised hand.

Billy Burke said, “He was hung on a cross.”

Sister Lucy nodded. “He was crucified like Jesus was,” she said as she turned to the board. “But he died on a different kind of cross. Do you remember what kind?”



The class mumbled without answering.

Sister Lucy picked up a piece of chalk. She drew an “X” on the board. “It was shaped like this.”

“And he was hung upside down,” a girl named Valerie said.

“That was Saint Peter,” Sister Lucy corrected her. She paced in front of the class. “What else do we know?”

Nick raised his hand.

“Nick?” she called to him.

“The feast of Saint Andrew means that the first day of Advent is on Sunday,” Nick said.

Sister Lucy smiled. “Very good. And what does ‘Advent’ mean?” she asked.

“Chocolate!” Nick said.

The class laughed.

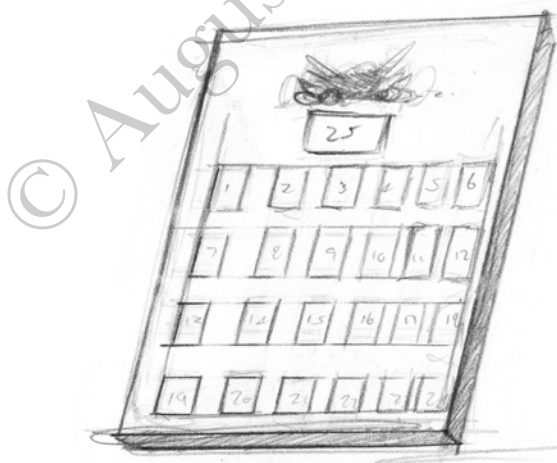
Nick felt his cheeks burn. “But it does,” he said softly.

*What was so funny?* he thought. Advent was the season that led up to Christmas. That meant his family would

put out a large Advent wreath. It was round and had four special candles.

His family would also bring out an Advent calendar built by his great grandfather. It was wooden and had painted windows that opened like small doors. Each door opened to a little box with a scene painted inside. Inside was also a small piece of chocolate. Nick loved chocolate.

“What else can you think of?” Sister Lucy asked.



A lot of hands shot up into the air.

Some of the students said that Advent meant putting up Christmas decorations and the Christmas tree.

Some said Advent meant Saint Nicholas and asking for presents.

Others said that Advent meant Christmas carols about Mary and Joseph and angels and shepherds.

Sister Lucy laughed. "Then I guess we should thank Saint Andrew for having his own day so that Advent would start," she said. Then she asked, "Do you remember what the word 'Advent' means?"

Nick had to think. The word "Advent" always made him think of the word "adventure" and that made him think it meant something big is going to happen.

Sam said, "It comes from the Latin word *adventus*. That means 'arrival' or 'approach.'"

"Very good, Sam," Sister Lucy said. "What 'arrival'?"

One of the students said, "Jesus was born."

Sister Lucy nodded. "And what else is going to happen?"

The class was stumped.

"Jesus is going to come again," Sister Lucy said. "Advent reminds us that he came, and he is coming again. We are called to faithfully watch and wait."

Sister Lucy began to hand out papers. Nick was afraid they were going to have a pop quiz. A few students groaned.

"It isn't a pop quiz," Sister Lucy said. "This is a sign-up sheet for our Christmas pageant. I expect everyone to help out with the roles or duties."

Nick looked at the list. It showed the names of Mary and Joseph, the angels, shepherds, and the Wise Men. There were also roles without names, like the guards and the innkeeper and his wife. The list also had duties for doing things backstage.

Sister Lucy said, “Take these forms home to your parents so they can approve what you want to do. Bring them back on Monday morning.”

Nick looked over at his sister Sam. She was smiling. Nick knew she would sign up to play Mary. She always wanted to play Mary but was never chosen before.

*Maybe this year*, Nick thought.

Then he thought of chocolate again.



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## CHAPTER TWO



### **Christmas Boxes**

Sam's father, Jon Perry, was bringing boxes in from the garage. The boxes had been used when they moved from Denver to Hope Springs last summer. This would be their first Advent and Christmas in their new house.

Sam thought, *Opening moving boxes is like opening Christmas presents.*

"We want this one," her mom said to her dad. The box had *Advent* written in big red letters on the side.

Mr. Perry nodded. He looked at her like

a schoolboy waiting for an assignment.

Mrs. Perry pointed to a second box with *Decorations* written on the side. “I don’t need that one now. Put it nearby for Saint Nicholas’s day,” she said.

Saint Nicholas’s feast day was when they put up the Christmas decorations.

“I’ll find a spot,” Mr. Perry said. He picked up the box he had just brought in and took it back out to the garage.

Nick sat at the kitchen table. He was leaning over the sign-up form for the Christmas pageant. “Do I have to sign up?” he asked.

“You have to do *something*,” his mother said.

Sam had already filled out her form. She had signed up to be Mary.

“Be a guard,” Sam said. “You could wear a Roman outfit and carry a spear. That would be fun.”

Nick shrugged. “Most of the boys in our class will sign up for that.”



Their older sister Lizzy walked in. “Be an angel. Then you would have to *act*.”

Sam laughed.

Nick smirked at her.

“I heard they’ve put wires above the stage so some of the angels will really *fly*,” Lizzy said.

“Really?” Nick was suddenly excited. “I’ll do that,” he said. He wrote on the form.

Mrs. Perry looked unsure. “That doesn’t sound safe,” she said.

Mr. Perry returned from the garage with another box.

“Not that one,” Mrs. Perry said. “That has Easter decorations.”

Mr. Perry looked at the box in his hands, groaned, then turned around and went back into the garage.

Sam giggled. Her father was popping in and out of the door like a cuckoo clock.

Lizzy sat at the table with her sketch pad. “I heard a rumor that they are going

to bring in real animals,” she said.

“Live animals?” Sam asked. “What kind?”

“Sheep and goats and a horse and maybe even a camel,” Lizzy replied. She was drawing something on the page in front of her.

Nick laughed. “Where would they find a camel?”

Mr. Perry came in with a large rectangular box. The box had *Advent Calendar* written on the side. He gave Mrs. Perry a hopeful look.

Mrs. Perry smiled at him and nodded.

Mr. Perry looked relieved.

“Where is the box with the Advent candles?” Mrs. Perry asked.

Mr. Perry shrugged. “I’ll find it.” He went back into the garage.

“Do you think it will snow?” Nick asked his mother. He was looking out of the large sliding glass door behind the kitchen table.

Heavy gray clouds had come over the Rocky Mountains. They settled above the town of Hope Springs like a large sheet.

"Would you like it to snow?" Mrs. Perry asked. She placed a box on the kitchen table and opened the top. She pushed aside packing paper.

"I would!" Sam said brightly.

"*Here they are,*" Mrs. Perry called out brightly. She held up a box of candles. Then she carefully lifted out a large Advent wreath and candleholder. It was a circle with four holders for the Advent candles. In between the slots were carefully carved figures of angels and shepherds and Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. It had been in the family for as long as Sam could remember.

"Jon!" she called out. "I have the Advent candles and wreath here!"

Sam rested her elbows on the table. She looked closely at the figures. One

of the shepherds' staffs was missing. The crown on a Wise Man had broken off and been glued back on by her mom. The angels wore flowing gowns of blue and gold. Their white wings were spread out wide.

Lizzy moved next to her. She looked at the angels with a smile. The two girls giggled. They had been talking a lot about angels ever since Lizzy told Sam she had seen her guardian angel.

"Where should I put the Advent wreath?" Mrs. Perry asked. She picked



up the wreath and took it through the doorway into the family room.

Mr. Perry walked in with another box and sat it on the counter. "This one isn't marked," he said.

Lizzy pointed to the side. "Summer clothes," she said.

"What? Where?" Mr. Perry asked.

Lizzy pointed to a small drawing of a t-shirt and a large sun on the side of the box.

Mr. Perry looked, then groaned. He took the box back out to the garage.

Nick looked at the boxes and packing paper. "Where's the chocolate?" he asked.

"Do you think they'll really have animals in the Christmas pageant?" Sam asked.

"Or flying angels?" Nick asked.

Lizzy shrugged.

*I hope I get to play Mary,* Sam thought.

"I put the Advent wreath in the middle of the coffee table," Mrs. Perry said



as she came in from the family room.

“We’ll light the first candle tomorrow.”

There was a loud crash in the garage.

“There must be a better way to spend my Saturday!” Mr. Perry called out.

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