

Three sources of information about the Advent Wreath, together with the Advent Prayers

The wreath sums up the entire spirit of Advent. Its gradual illumination reminds us simply and beautifully the approach of our Savior, the Light of the world.

The spiritual symbolism of the wreath:

-The round shape represents God's eternity. Just as a circle has no beginning or end, so too, God has no beginning or end.

- The wreath's evergreen foliage represents God's immutability. Just as evergreen retains its green color throughout the year, God too is unchangeable. Even though man sinned, God still loved him. For this reason, He sent His Son to save us. Also, green is the liturgical color of hope. Advent is certainly a time of hope in God's mercy and redemption.

- The four candles symbolize the centuries man waited for the coming of the Messiah. Three of them are purple because purple is the liturgical color of penance. Advent is a time of penance. Through self-sacrifice and mortification we turn to God and prepare ourselves for Christ's coming. We remember it was because of sin that man needed a savior.

-But Advent is also a time of joyful anticipation. We are preparing for the Feast which celebrates our Savior's coming in history and looks forward to His second coming in glory. Thus, one candle is pink, lit the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, symbolizing our joy.

-The gradual illumination of the four candles is a visible sign that the nearer we approach Christmas, the nearer we approach the Feast that celebrates the birth of the Christ, the Light of the world.

-At Christmas time, the evergreens can be replenished, the candles changed to fresh white candles and the wreath adorned with white and gold ribbons. Using the Christmas collect, you can continue lighting the candles throughout the Christmas season.



THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent wreath custom is an expression of our longing for the coming of the Savior thru grace at Christmas and for His second and final coming in glory.

Originating in Germany several hundred years ago, it has recently become a cherished custom for many families throughout America. Children are deeply impressed with a beautiful symbolism of the Advent wreath. Their anticipation of Christmas, the birthday of Christ, increases as the ceremonies progress each week of Advent.

To assemble the wreath, use a circular form (wire or wood) on which you can secure green foliage. Using thin wire or thread, wire or tie clusters of evergreen branches to the circle. Insert four equally spaced candles – three purple and one pink.

The four candleholders can be made of tin can lids. Cut four incisions crosswise in each lid, bend two sides up to hold the candle and two down around the hoop. Decorate the wreath with purple ribbon and placed it on a table.

If you prefer to have the Advent wreath suspended from the ceiling, fastened four purple ribbons, each about 27 inches long, with knots in the spaces between the candles. Tie the loose ends to a light fixture.

A simpler process for a table Advent wreath consists in using any type of green Christmas wreath, or evergreens loosely tied in a circle. Decorate with purple ribbon. Place four low candleholders inside the wreath directly on the table and insert the candles.

The candles represent the four weeks of Advent, and every Sunday an additional candle is lighted, the pink one being reserved for Gaudete Sunday. The prayers, to be said each day, consist of the collects of the Sundays of Advent.

Daily the family gathers around the Advent wreath, generally before the evening meal. The proper number of candles are lighted. Then the prayer of the week is said. When other lights in the room are extinguished during the prayer, a gentle glow of the lighted candle, or candles, will provide an inspirational atmosphere of reverence.

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The Blessing of the Advent wreath by the father takes place on the first Sunday of Advent. The following prayer can be used:

Father: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who hath made heaven and earth.

Father: Let us pray, O God, by whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth Thy blessing upon this wreath and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from Thee abundant graces. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

He sprinkles the wreath with holy water.

The daily Advent wreath ceremony follows.



First Week

(To be repeated each day of first week)

The youngest child lights the first purple candle, and the following prayer is said:

Father: Lord, rouse Your power, we pray, and come; that we may be served by Your protection to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sin and by Your deliverance to be made free from them; You who are God, living and reigning with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.



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Second Week

(To be repeated each day of second week)

The oldest child lights the first and second purple candles, and the following prayer is said:

Father: Stir up our hearts, Lord, to make ready the paths of Your only begotten Son, that through His coming we may become worthy to serve You with purified minds. You who are God, living and reigning...

All: Amen.



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Third Week

(To be repeated each day of third week)

The mother lights the first two purple candles and pink candle, and the following prayer is said:

Father: Lord, lend Your ear, we beg, to our prayers, and lighten the darkness of our minds with the grace of Your coming. You who are God, living and reigning...

All: Amen.



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Fourth Week

(To be repeated each day of the fourth week)

The father lights all four candles, and the following prayer is said:

Father: Lord, rouse Your power, we pray, and come; lend Your great strength to aid us; so that thru the help of Your grace and by Your merciful forgiveness, the good which our sins obstruct may be quickly brought to us. You are God, living and reigning...

All: Amen.

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Now the penitential season of Advent is over and the time to rejoice is at hand. The Advent wreath is transformed into a Christmas wreath. Ribbon and candles are replaced with red ribbon and long red tapers (to be lighted at breakfast on Christmas morning) and, if desired, other festive decorations are added. The Christmas wreath, displayed in a

prominent place, either on mantle or table, or suspended from the ceiling, can be kept until Epiphany if it does not shed too much.

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Advent Psalms and Prayers

O come, O come, Emmanuel!
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appears.

CHORUS: Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel
To thee shall come Emmanuel.

O come Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory over the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice! O Israel
To thee shall come Emmanuel.

Veni, veni Emmanuel!
Captivum solve Israel
Qui gemit in exilio
Privatus Dei Filio

Gaude, Gaude, Emmanuel!
Nascetur pro te, Israel.

Veni, O Jesse Virgula!
Exhostis tuis ungula
Despecu tuos tartari
Educ, et antro barbathri

Gaude, Gaude, Emmanuel!
Nascetur pro te, Israel.

“Hail and blessed be the hour and the moment in which the Son of God was born of the Most Pure Blessed Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in the piercing cold. In that hour vouchsafe, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my petitions, through the merits of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.”

O Infant Savior, many times in life we have prepared for guests about to enter our beloved household. Some guests were important, but not nearly as important as the heavenly Visitor for Whom we now prepare out hearts.

The prophets of old longed for Thy coming into their world. We long for Thy return to our modern world. If Advent means the coming of Christ, there is nothing we need so badly today as an advent – another coming of Thyself and Thy principles into our pagan times. Only then will we breathe in a Christian atmosphere in which joy replaces sorrow, peace replaces war and disturbance, in which love casts out darkness.

O Mary, my mother, be my model this holy season. Christ was alive within thee during the first advent. We want Him to be more alive within us than ever during this, our advent. May we not merely possess our precious Catholic faith – rather, may it take complete possession of us, so that wherever we go, whatever we do or say, it will be the Christ Child that inspires us.

We resolve to make our Christmas a holy day with Christ instead of a holiday without Him. We resolve to observe Christmas as the birthday of Christ, not merely as a day to give and receive merchandise; to help at least one poor family in honor of the Holy Family of Bethlehem. We promise to remember that the real symbols of Christmas are the star, the stable and the crib, not Santa and his reindeer.

Finally, we promise every day to give glory to God in the highest and to work and pray for peace on earth among men of good will. Amen.

PSALMS AND PRAYERS * MEDITATION

Drop down dew from above, ye heavens and let the clouds rain the Just One; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Savior. (Isa XIV 8)

(After each verse following recite the antiphon in unison:)

“Come let us adore Our Lord and King, who is about to come to us.”

First week 1. Rejoice, O daughter of Sion, and be jubilantly glad, O daughter of Israel. Behold, thy Lord comes, and in His day a great light shall arise; the mountains

shall drop down sweetness and the hills shall flow with milk and honey, for the Great Prophet shall come and He shall renew Jerusalem. (Roman Breviary)

2. Behold, thy God comes, the man of the House of David, to sit upon the throne; and you shall see and your heart shall rejoice. (Roman Breviary)

Second week 3. Behold, the Lord, our Protector, comes, the Holy One of Israel, having on His head the regal crown, and He shall rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. (Apoc. Xiv 14; Ps Ixxi 8)

4. Behold, the Lord comes, and He will not lie, should He tarry await Him, for He shall assuredly come and shall not delay. (Roman Breviary)

Third week 5. The Lord shall come down as rain upon the fleece, and in His days shall justice spring up and abundance of peace; and all the kings of the earth shall adore Him, all nations serve Him. (Psalm Ixxi 6, 7, 11.)

6. A child is born to us, and He shall be called the Mighty God; He shall sit upon the throne of David, His father, and shall rule; for the government is upon His shoulders. (Isa. Ix 6)

Fourth week 7. Bethlehem, city of the most high God, out of thee shall go forth the Ruler of Israel, and His proceeding is from the beginning, even from the days of eternity; and He shall be exalted in the midst of the whole earth, and peace shall hold sway in the day of His coming.

8. Our forerunner Jesus, the Lamb undefiled, has entered the Holy of Holies for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech ... He is the King of Justice ... having neither beginning of days nor end of life. (Heb. vi 20)

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