

THE ADVENT WREATH



The Advent Wreath – its origins and meaning

Candles

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The Advent Wreath

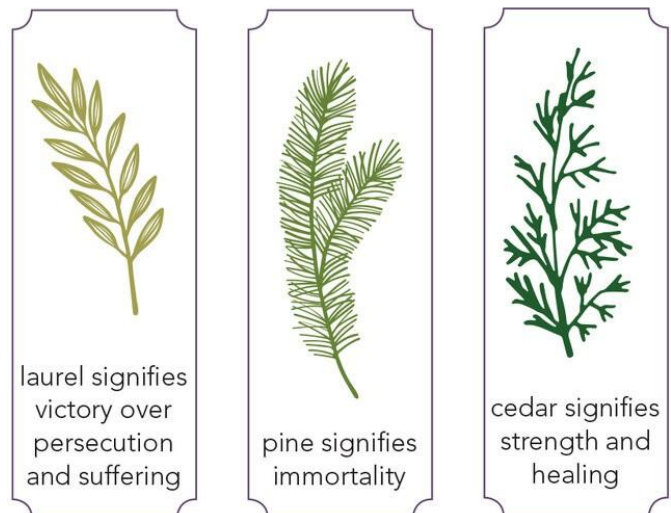
The word “advent” means “coming.” In this season, our focus should be on the two comings of Christ to earth: as our Saviour two thousand years ago, and as our Judge one day in the future. The Advent wreath is a rich symbol of this season.



The Advent wreath is a circular garland of evergreen branches representing eternity. On that wreath, four or five candles are typically arranged. Each candle represents an aspect of the spiritual preparation for the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Advent wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous, everlasting life. The laurel signifies Victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew: immortality; and cedar: strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns and the red berries, the blood of Our Saviour. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul and the everlasting life offered by Christ. Any pine cones, nuts or seedpods used to decorate the wreath also symbolize life and resurrection.

Evergreens signify continuous life



All together, the wreath of evergreens depicts the immortality of our soul and the new, everlasting life promised to us through Christ

All together, the wreath of evergreens depicts the immortality of our soul and new, everlasting life promised to us through Christ, the Eternal Word of the Father, who entered our world becoming true man and who was victorious over sin and death through His own passion, death, and Resurrection.

Candles

Advent candles readily demonstrate the strong contrast between darkness and light, which is an important biblical image. Jesus referred to himself as the "Light of the World" that dispels the darkness of sin: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Human history spanned long ages shrouded in the darkness of sin before our prophesied Saviour would finally make his appearance to free us from its dominion. As the Messiah's "Advent" (or "coming") draws nearer another candle is lit, with each candle dispelling the darkness a little more. Thus, the Advent wreath helps us to spiritually contemplate the great drama of salvation history that surrounds the birth of God Incarnate, who comes to redeem the human race and make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

It also reminds us that, as Christians, we're meant to shine the light of Christ in this world. As Jesus tells us, You are the light of the world ...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)

The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. While the number of weeks and days of Advent preparation varied in the early centuries of the church, St. Gregory VII (d. 1095) set the number of Sundays in Advent to four, with the first Sunday marking the beginning of the liturgical year.

Three candles are purple, and one is rose. The purple candles symbolize the prayer, penance and preparatory sacrifices and good works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday, when the priest also wears rose vestments at Mass. Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over and they draw closer to Christmas. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope

surrounding Our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of His second coming to judge the living and the dead.

The candles also have their own special significance.



The first candle, which is purple, symbolizes hope. It is sometimes called the "Prophecy Candle" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

The second candle, also purple, represents faith/love. It is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.



The third candle is pink and symbolizes joy. It is called the "Shepherd's Candle," and is pink, rose being the liturgical colour for joy. The third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete Sunday, reminding us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy of having reached the midpoint of Advent.

On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Saviour. This final candle, the "Angel's Candle," symbolizes peace. It reminds us of the message of the angels: "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men."



Family Prayer for Lighting Advent Candles

Jesuit Institute

This prayer could be used when lighting the candles of the second, third and fourth weeks of Advent, after the wreath has been blessed in the first week.

Lord,
as we prepare to celebrate
the birth of your son,
Jesus Christ,
Help us to welcome him into our hearts.
As the light of our advent wreath
grows stronger,
week by week,
make us strong in following him
in the love and the peace
we show to others.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing of an Advent Wreath within Mass:

Archdiocese of Dublin

The celebrant with hands outstretched prays:

Lord God,
your Church joyfully awaits the coming of its Saviour,
who enlightens our hearts
and dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin.
Pour out your blessings upon us
as we light the candles of this wreath;
may their light reflect the splendour of Christ
who is Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.

Or:

Lord our God,
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:
He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,
He is the Wisdom that teaches and guides us,
He is the saviour of every nation.
Lord God,
let your blessing come upon us
as we light the candles of this wreath.
May the wreath and its light
be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.
May He come quickly and not delay.
We ask this through Christ our Lord,
Amen.

'O come

O come, Emanuel'

During Advent, we prepare for the coming of Jesus. He who brought Light into the darkness – for four weeks, represented by the four candles around the Advent wreath.

How to make an Advent Wreath:

1. Get some candles, 3 purple, 1 pink, 1 white. The white candle should be larger for the middle. Packs can be purchased in your parish shop, a discount shop or online.
2. Find a holder for the candles. Drill holes in a round block of wood, buy an advent wreath frame, use small holders available inexpensively anywhere, or an oasis.
3. Get some real or artificial foliage, holly, pine, laurel, yew and laurel and place in a circle.
4. Place the candles in a circle shape with the white candle in the centre.
5. Further decorate with pine cones, bows, poinsettias. Get creative with your design.
6. Add the advent wreath to a sacred space in your home, school or church.
7. Pray at your Advent wreath.

'Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem. May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man'. Pope Francis

Make & Pray this Advent



**'Hope, Peace
Joy, Love'**

What Does Each Candle Represent?

The four candles represent the four Sundays of Advent, and they respectively symbolise, HOPE, PEACE, JOY, AND LOVE. Also light a fifth candle on Christmas Eve or Day to represent the birth of Jesus.

- First Purple Candle – HOPE Prophecy Candle**
Second Purple Candle – PEACE Bethlehem Candle
Third Pink (Rose) Candle – JOY Shepherd's Candle
Fourth Purple Candle – LOVE Angel's Candle
White Christ Candle – Christmas Day

Advent Wreath Blessing

*Lord our God,
We praise You for Your Son, Jesus Christ.
He is Emmanuel, the hope of all people,
He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,
He is the Saviour of every nation.*

*Lord God, let Your blessing come upon us as
we light the candles of this wreath.*

*May the wreath and its light be a sign of
Christ's promise to bring us salvation.*

May He come quickly and not delay.

Through Christ our Lord.

AMEN

A Christmas Prayer

Loving Father,

Help us remember the birth of Jesus:

That we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wisemen.

That we may close the door of hate and open the door of love - all over the world.

That we may let kindness come with every gift and love with every greeting.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be your children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven for Jesus' sake. **AMEN**



Family Prayer at the Advent Wreath

Week 1 – HOPE

Light the first Purple candle

Child: God, we ask you to bless our family Advent Wreath. It has evergreen leaves, reminding us that you will always be with us... and it is shaped like a circle, with no beginning or end, just like your love for us is always there for us, surrounding us every day.

Adult: Jesus, we look forward to celebrating your birth at Christmas. Open our hearts to love all the people we meet each day.

All the family: Come, Lord Jesus, into our hearts and in our home.

On Christmas Day

Light the White candle

Child: Jesus, today we light a white candle, to celebrate your birthday...thank you for coming into our lives, and thank you for all the presents we received to celebrate your birthday.

Adult: Jesus, you are our friend and brother...help us to be friend to everyone we meet.

All the family: Stay with us Lord Jesus in our hearts and in our home.



Week 2 - PEACE

Light the second Purple candle

Child: Jesus, our brother, we ask you to bless our family during this Advent time. We light these candles to remind us that you bring light into our lives and into the world. We thank you for showing us how to show love and be kind and help those who need help.

Adult: God, your story of love for people all through time reminds us that you are with us, offering us light and hope. Help us to trust in you this week.

All the family: Come Lord Jesus into our hearts and into our home.

Week 4 - LOVE

Light the third Purple candle

Child: Jesus our friend and brother, we ask you to bless all the people who are waiting to celebrate your birthday....help us to spend these days of waiting by showing love and kindness to everyone.

Adult: God, your love for us meant that you would give us your own Son. Help us to realise that you love us so much. We look forward to showing your love by being with you on Christmas Day.

All the family: Come Lord Jesus into our hearts and into our home.

Week 3 - JOY

Light the Pink candle

Child: God, we light the pink candle today. This reminds us that you want joy for us...you want us to trust you and believe that you are there for us, even when things are hard.

Adult: Jesus, our friend, we thank you for the joy you give us as a family...for all the love and fun we enjoy together. Help us to share our joy with others.

All the family: Come Lord Jesus into our hearts and into our home.

Prayer at the Advent Wreath

First Week in Advent Light the purple Candle of HOPE

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” —
Isaiah 9:6

Lord our God, we praise You for sending Your Son to be the light of the world. As we light this candle of hope, may its flame remind us of Your promises fulfilled in Christ. May we prepare our hearts for His coming with joyful expectation.

Through Christ our Lord. **All:** Amen.

On Christmas Eve or Day Light the White Christ Candle

“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” —
John 1:14

Lord Jesus, You are the Light of the world. You were born to dispel darkness and bring us salvation. Bless this wreath and all who gather around it. May Your light shine in our hearts today and always.

Through Christ our Lord. **All:** Amen.

Second week in Advent Light the Purple Candle of PEACE

“For unto us a Child is born... and His name will be called Prince of Peace.” — *Isaiah 9:6*

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, who brings peace to every heart. As we light this second candle, grant that we may work for peace in our families, our community, and the world.

Through Christ our Lord. **All:** Amen.



Third Week in Advent - Light the third Purple candle of LOVE

“God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.” — *John 3:16*

Loving God, Your eternal Word took flesh and came to dwell among us in love.

As we light this final candle, kindle in us the fire of Your love, that we may show Your light to the world through acts of kindness and mercy. Through Christ our Lord. **All:** Amen.

Third Week in Advent Light the Pink candle of JOY

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!” — *Philippians 4:4*

Lord God, we rejoice in You and give You thanks.

For You have given us Your Son, Jesus, our Saviour.

As we light this candle of joy, fill our hearts with gladness for the nearness of our Redeemer.

Through Christ our Lord. **All:** Amen.