



Welcome, Advent. Prepare the Way

Today begins the Advent season which prepares us for the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. The name derives from the Latin verb “ven,” meaning to come.

Certainly, the days will be filled with shopping, baking, wrapping presents, cooking and spending time with family and friends. But let us always remember the true meaning of the season.

One Catholic tradition is the nightly lighting of an Advent wreath at the evening meal.

The history

The Advent wreath dates back to the 16th Century but the modern version was evolved 300 years later. Johann Hinrich Wichern, a German Lutheran, created a wreath to help children understand the passage of time.

Using an old cart wheel decorated with evergreens, he placed white candles for each Sunday with red ones in between. As the children lit a new candle, they could easily see how close they were to celebrating the birth of Christ.

The materials were like what was easily available, but the wreath does represent Catholic symbolism. The circle shape is thought to show Christ’s eternal presence. Evergreens symbolize life in the Catholic faith. Candles mean “amen” and the flame shows Christ as the Light of the World.

The wreath

An Advent wreath has many looks. It may still resemble Wichern’s, but typically uses three purple candles plus a rose or pink one. Some have a fifth white candles. (Source: stmagdalen.org.)

Purple candles represent prayer, penance and preparatory sacrifice – all to remind us of how we should prepare during the weeks before Christmas. The pink candle, lit on the third or Gaudate Sunday, means to rejoice. The optional white candle is the Christ candle for purity.

Lighting the candles

On the first night of Advent, you will bless the Advent wreath. This is followed by a prayer which changes weekly. Candles are lit in the following order:

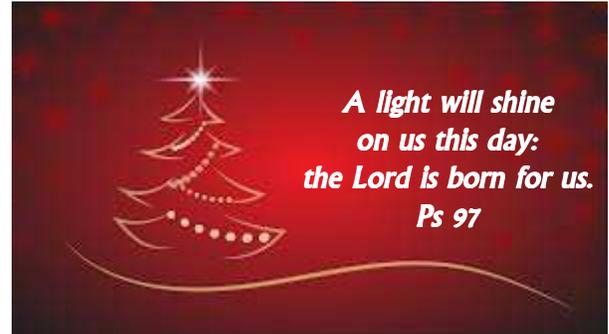
- ✦ For the first week of Advent, light one purple candle.
- ✦ During second week of Advent, light two purple candles.
- ✦ When you reach the third week of Advent (traditionally called Gaudete Sunday), light two purple candles and one rose (pink) candle.
- ✦ During the fourth week, light all four candles.
- ✦ If you use a white candle in the center, it is lit on Christmas Eve.

Advent Wreath Prayers

Blessing the Advent Wreath

(Use this prayer to bless your Advent Wreath at home. Holy Water may be sprinkled on the wreath.)

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. Amen.



Prayer for the First Week of Advent

(Repeat this prayer each day as one purple Advent candle is lit. Allow the candle to burn during the meal.)

O Lord,
stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, and come, that, by
Thy protection,
we may deserve to be rescued
from the threatening dangers of our sins
and saved by Thy deliverance.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer for the Second Week of Advent

(Light two purple candles this week.)

O Lord,
stir up our hearts that we may prepare
for Thy only begotten Son,
that through His coming,
we may be made worthy to serve Thee
with pure minds.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer for the Third Week of Advent

(Light two purple candles and one rose candle this week.)

O Lord, we beg Thee,
incline Thy ear to our prayers
and enlighten the darkness of our minds
by the grace of Thy visitation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for the Fourth Week of Advent

(Light all four candles. If you have a fifth, white candle, it is lit on Christmas Eve.)

O Lord, stir up Thy power, we pray Thee,
and come; and with great might help us,
that with the help of Thy Grace,
Thy merciful forgiveness may hasten
what our sins impede.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Advent Family Prayer

God of Love, Your son, Jesus, is your greatest gift to us.
He is a sign of your love. Help us walk in that love during the weeks of Advent,
As we wait and prepare for his coming. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior.
Author Unknown, Source: xavier.edu