

SYMBOLISM OF THE WREATH

*There are several interpretations of the symbolism of the Advent wreath. Advent is four weeks the accumulation of light is an expression of the growing anticipation of the birth of Jesus Christ, who in Christian faith is seen as the light of the world. The circular wreath represents God's eternity and unity. Evergreens are a symbol of enduring life.

In some traditions the **first candle** is called the prophet's candle and is meant to signify the hope of Jesus' coming. The **second** is called the Bethlehem candle in honor of the city of Christ's birth. The **third candle** is the shepherds' candle. The **final candle** is the angels' candle, symbolizing the angelic proclamation of joy at Christ's birth.

*(excerpted from en.wikipedia.org)

**A CHILDRENS ADVENT PRAYER

How dark outside!

But see—a star's in the sky;

Mary and Joseph are passing by.

So let's light a candle to welcome them

As they go on their way to Bethlehem.



We'll light a candle in church each day,
We'll light one candle each week and pray.

** (excerpted from www.ic-church.com)

Each day beginning the **first Sunday of Advent**, your family should gather around the **Advent Wreath**, generally before the evening meal. The proper number of candles are then lighted and a prayer is said.

This ends on Christmas at which time you may replace the candles with **all white** to honor the Birth of Jesus, when these are lighted the children may like to sing "Happy Birthday to Baby Jesus".



Lighting candles in an Advent Wreath is a simple way to start a tradition of family worship in the home.

Those who participate will cherish the experience all their lives.

May Baby Jesus shine His Light upon you during this Holy Season !

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BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS FOR THE ADVENT WREATH



A TRADITIONAL CUSTOM USED DURING
THE ADVENT SEASON TO SYMBOLIZE THE
BIRTH OF CHRIST
AND BEGINS THE FIRST SUNDAY
OF ADVENT EACH YEAR

HISTORY OF THE WREATH

***The** ring or wheel of the Advent wreath of evergreens decorated with candles was a symbol in northern Europe long before the arrival of Christianity. The circle symbolized the eternal cycle of the seasons while the evergreens and lighted candles signified the persistence of life in the midst of winter. Some sources suggest the wreath was in common use in the Middle Ages, others that it was established in Germany as a Christian custom only in the 16th century, and others that the Advent wreath was not invented until the 19th century. This last theory credits Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881), a Protestant pastor in Germany and a pioneer in urban mission work among the poor, as the inventor of the modern Advent wreath. During Advent, children at a mission school founded by Wichern would ask daily if Christmas had arrived. In 1839, he built a large wooden ring (made out of an old cartwheel) with 19 small red and 4 large white candles. A small candle was lit successively every weekday during Advent. On Sundays, a large white candle was lit. The custom gained ground among Protestant churches in Germany and evolved into the smaller wreath with four or five candles known today. Roman Catholics in Germany began to adopt the custom in the 1920's, and in the 1930's it spread to North America. In modern times the wreath has been seen as the lead up to Christmas, and in that context the Advent Wreath serves as a reminder of the approach of the Birth of Christ. **(excerpted from en.wikipedia.org)*



THE WREATH

****During** the Advent season families should spend time together preparing for the approaching celebration of the Birth of Christ. An Advent wreath can be a great focal point for family prayers and holiday celebrations. An Advent wreath is a wreath of laurel, spruce or similar foliage with four candles that are lighted successively in the weeks of Advent to symbolize the light that the birth of Christ brought into the world. The circular shape of the wreath is a symbol of eternity, and the greenery symbolizes hope and renewal. There can be pinecones and berries adorning the greenery, but because Advent is a penitential season, it shouldn't be highly decorated with colorful ornaments.

Traditionally three of the candles are **purple**, the color of kings and of penance. A **rose** colored candle is used to mark the Third Sunday of Advent as a time to rejoice over the closeness of Christmas and the Birth of Baby Jesus. Children love the beauty of this simple traditional ceremony.

*** (excerpted from www.stlawrence.org)*

BLESSING AND PRAYERS FOR THE ADVENT WREATH

***BLESSING**

(usually done by the Head of the House)

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

ALL: Who made heaven and earth.

FATHER: O God, by whose Word all things are sanctified, pour forth Your blessing upon this wreath and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from You abundant graces. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen. *(The wreath is then sprinkled with holy water. Then follows the prayer which is said before the evening meal during the 1st week). Family members can take turns lighting and blowing out the candles.*

WEEKLY PRAYERS SAID BEFORE THE EVENING MEAL

FIRST WEEK: (FIRST PURPLE CANDLE IS LIT)

FATHER: 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.

ALL: Amen.

SECOND WEEK: (TWO PURPLE CANDLES ARE LIT)

FATHER: 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.

ALL: Amen

THIRD WEEK: (TWO PURPLE CANDLES AND THE ROSE CANDLE ARE LIT)

FATHER: 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.

ALL: Amen.

FOURTH WEEK: (ALL CANDLES ARE LIT)

FATHER: 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.

ALL: Amen.

** (excerpted from www.stlawrence.org)*