

The Advent Wreath

*Celebrating the Coming of
the Christ Child*



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What does Advent mean?

The word “Advent” comes from the Latin verb “ven”, which means to come. On the first Sunday of the Advent season, Catholics prepare to celebrate the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Did you know? The tradition of the Advent wreath is believed to have begun in Germany!

The Symbolism of the Candles

Long before the days of electricity, people often lit candles and placed them on wreaths during the month of December. These candles were thought to represent the hope for the light of spring that was sure to come soon. Over time, people began to prepare for the coming of the Christ child by lighting candles to represent the Son of God as the “Light of the World”, or one who casts away the darkness.

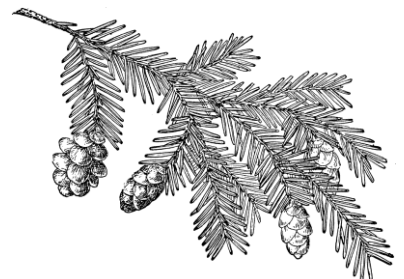


The Symbolism of the Shape

Advent wreaths are shaped in a circle with no clear beginning or end. In the Catholic Church, we believe that Christ is eternal. We believe that He has neither a beginning, nor an end – he is with us always and forever. The shape of the Advent wreath symbolizes Christ’s eternal presence in our lives.

The Symbolism of the Evergreen

Before artificial wreaths were available, people often fashioned their own wreaths from the boughs of an evergreen tree. In the Catholic faith, the evergreen symbolizes eternal life. The boughs of an evergreen tree remain alive year round, even throughout the darkest nights of December.



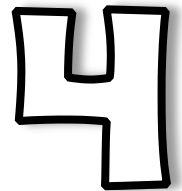
The Symbolism of the Colors

The traditional Advent wreath is adorned with four colored candles; three purple and one pink. Each candle holds a special meaning for Catholics. During each week of Advent, we celebrate the coming of the Christ child by lighting one of the candles on the Advent wreath. Each of the purple candles on the wreath represent prayer, forgiveness, and sacrifice. The pink candle represents joy. These candles remind us of the hope, love, joy, and peace that Christ has brought us.

Did you know? Many people also add a white candle, known as the “Christ Candle” in the center of their Advent wreath to represent the purity and holiness of the Lord, Jesus Christ. This candle is lit on Christmas day in celebration of the birth of the newborn king.

The Symbolism of the Number

Advent wreaths traditionally hold 4 candles, although some people may also add a fifth candle, the Christ candle, which will adorn the center of the Advent wreath. The number of candles on the Advent wreath is especially important for Catholics; each candle represents 1,000 years. Together, the 4 candles make up the 4,000 years that the early Christians waited for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.



Did you know? The 4,000 years represented by the 4 candles represent the time of Adam and Eve until the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Heavenly Father,
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in unity,
that our praise and worship
might echo in these walls
and also through our lives.
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in mission,
that the hope within
might be the song we sing,
and the melody of our lives.
In this Advent of expectation
draw us together in service,
that the path we follow
might lead us from a stable
to a glimpse of eternity.**

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The Blessing of the Advent Wreath

Before you have gathered for the blessing, select one of the following Scripture passages to be read during the blessing: **Isaiah 11:1-4, 61:1-2, Mark 1:1-8, James 5:7-10, or Philippians 4:4-7.**

Leader: This week we begin the season of Advent, when the days grow short and darkness closes in. We are preparing to celebrate at Christmas the birth of Jesus, who is the light of the world. Let's spend some quiet time being aware of the darkness and longing for the light.

(Pause a few moments and then pray the Sign of the Cross.)

Leader: Lord God, bless this wreath and bless us as well. May this wreath remind us of the hope and joy that Jesus brings into the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: *Advent* means "arrival." In the season of Advent, the church prepares to celebrate the coming of Jesus. We recall the past, celebrate the present, and look to the future with hope. We prepare to celebrate not only the birth of Jesus but also his presence in our family. We wait for the return of the Lord at the end of time when all hopes will be fulfilled. We await the coming of the light that will shine in the darkness, shining light on our path to peace.

Reader: A reading from [name of book in Bible].

(Reader reads selected passage.)

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God. Amen.



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The Four Weeks of Advent

Week One: On the first Sunday of Advent, we light the first purple candle. This candle represents **hope**, and reminds us that Christ is coming. Families often say a blessing over their Advent wreath during this first week of the Advent season.



Week Two: On the second Sunday of Advent, we light the second purple candle. This candle represents our **love** and our faith in the Lord, our God, and reminds us of the faith that Joseph had in his wife, Mary. During this week, we also remember the journey of the Blessed Mother and Joseph to the town of Bethlehem.



Week Three: On the third Sunday of Advent, we light the pink candle. This candle represents **joy**. During this time, we rejoice in the coming of Jesus Christ, and we remember the joy felt throughout the world as the newborn king was born.



Week Four: On the fourth, and final Sunday of Advent, we light the third purple candle. This candle represents **peace**. During this time, we praise the Lord, our God for the peace that his Son has brought. We also remember God's message to the angels, "There will be peace on earth, and good will toward men".

