

The History of the Advent Wreath



The Advent wreath is part of our long-standing Catholic tradition. However, the actual origins are uncertain. By the Middle Ages, Christians adapted this tradition and used Advent wreaths as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. After all, Christ is “the Light that came into the world” to dispel the darkness of sin and to radiate the truth and love of God (cf. John 3:19-21). By 1600, Catholics had more formal practices surrounding the Advent wreath.

The symbolism of the Advent wreath is beautiful. The wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous life. Even these evergreens have a traditional meaning which can be adapted to our faith: The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns. 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 found in Christ. Any pine cones, nuts, or seedpods used to decorate the wreath also symbolize life and resurrection. All together, the wreath of evergreens depicts the immortality of our soul and the 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.

The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. A tradition is that each week represents one thousand years, to sum to the 4,000 years from Adam and Eve until the Birth of the Savior. Three candles are purple and one is rose. The purple candles in particular 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 are close 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 light again signifies Christ, the Light of the world. Some modern day adaptations include a white candle placed in the middle of the wreath, which represents Christ and is lit on Christmas Eve. Another tradition is to replace the three purple and one rose candles with four white candles, which will be lit throughout Christmas season.

In family practice, the Advent wreath is most appropriately lit at dinner time after the blessing of the food.

Since Advent is a time to stir-up our faith in the Lord, the wreath and its prayers provide us a way to augment this special preparation for Christmas. Moreover, this good tradition helps us to remain vigilant in our homes and not lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas.

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-history-of-the-advent-wreath.html> Blessing Of An Advent Wreath

Blessing of an Advent Wreath

The use of the [Advent Wreath](#) is a traditional practice which has found its place in the Church as well as in the home. The blessing of an Advent Wreath takes place on the First Sunday of Advent or on the evening before the First Sunday of Advent.

When the blessing of the Advent Wreath is celebrated in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another member of the family. The wreath is blessed at the beginning of Advent so that throughout the whole four weeks you and your family will be drawn into deeper conversion to Christ through its symbolism and meaning

All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Response (R/.) Who made heaven and earth.

Then the Scripture, [Isaiah 9:](#) (lines 1-2 and 5-6) or [Isaiah 63](#) (lines 16-17 & 19) or [Isaiah 64](#) (lines 2-7) is read:

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

R/. Thanks be to God.

With hands joined, the leader says:

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 Savior 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.

R/. Amen.

The blessing may conclude with a verse from

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”:

O come, desire of nations, bind

in one the hearts of humankind;

bid ev'ry sad division cease

and be thyself our Prince of peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

shall come to thee, O Israel.

—From [Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers](#)

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/sacraments-and-sacramentals/sacramentals-blessings/objects/blessing-of-an-advent-wreath.cfm>

For weekly prayers for lighting your Advent wreath, please see this website.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/prayers/view.cfm?id=952>

The Four Candles of Advent

- The 1st Sunday of Advent symbolizes **Hope** with the “Prophet’s Candle” reminding us that Jesus is coming.
- The 2nd Sunday of Advent symbolizes **Faith** with the “Bethlehem Candle” reminding us of Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem.
- The 3rd Sunday of Advent symbolizes **Joy** with the “Shepherd’s Candle” reminding us of the Joy the world experienced at the coming birth of Jesus.
- The 4th Sunday of Advent symbolizes **Peace** with the “Angel’s Candle” reminding us of the message of the angels: “Peace on Earth, Good will toward Men.”

ENHANCE YOUR WREATH WITH MORE SYMBOLISM

The circle shape of the **wreath**, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, immortality, and everlasting life found in Christ.

The use of **evergreens** reminds us of our eternal life with Christ.

Pointy holly leaves and **berries** represent the crown of thorns from the Passion of Jesus and his Precious Blood.

Pine cones symbolize Christ’s Resurrection.