

The meaning of the *Advent Wreath*



This Sunday we begin the liturgical season of Advent. As Catholics, our celebrations of events and truths of our faith always include rich symbols and gestures. These may spark our interest or carry sentimental value on the surface, but the more we understand their deep meaning, the more powerfully they can speak to our hearts and become actual expressions of our own lived faith.

The Wreath

The circular shape of the wreath symbolizes the unending nature of God's love for us. It also reminds us of the unending life that Jesus came to bring us — starting here in this life, and continuing after death in heaven. The wreath is often made of pine bows which are ever-green, also symbolic of the everlasting life Jesus offers us.

Four Candles

Each candle represents a week of Advent. The season includes four Sundays. Depending on when Dec. 25th falls, the fourth week of Advent may not be a full week. Some Advent wreathes include a white candle in the center which is lit on Christmas and represents Christ, the Light of the World being born! As each week's candle is lit—adding another flame, the dark days of winter are gradually brightened by the coming of our Savior.

Purple and Rose

Each liturgical season has a different color associated with it. Purple is used during Advent and Lent (pay attention to the priest's vestments at Mass!) and is symbolic of royalty and repentance. While Lent especially focuses on the repentance, Advent too, is meant to be a time of conversion of heart. However, Advent is less somber and has more of a tone of joyful anticipation. The rose colored candle is lit in the third week of Advent and represents the joy of the quickly approaching celebration of Jesus' coming.

Blessing of the Advent Wreath

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) 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. 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. Amen.

Blessing taken from www.loyolapress.com

