



How to Celebrate Advent in your own Home

The **Advent wreath** is a symbol of the beginning of the Church year in church as well as in homes.

It is a circular evergreen wreath (real or artificial) with four candles around the wreath.

The wreath is symbolic and a vehicle to tell the Christmas story.

The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God's eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end.

The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life.

The **Candles** symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son.

The **four candles** represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.

The **1st CANDLES** (purple) is traditionally the candle of **Expectation** or **Hope**

The **2nd CANDLE** (purple) **THE BETHLEHEM CANDLE** or **THE CANDLE OF PREPARATION**

The **3rd CANDLE** (pink) **THE SHEPHERD CANDLE** or **THE CANDLE OF JOY**

The **4th CANDLE** (purple) **THE ANGEL CANDLE** or **THE CANDLE OF LOVE**

when the angles announced the good news of a Savior.

The **light of the candles** itself becomes an important symbol of the season. The light reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace to others (Isa 42:6). The progression in the lighting of the candles symbolizes the various aspects of our waiting experience. As the candles are lighted over the four-week period, it also symbolizes the darkness of fear and hopelessness receding and the shadows of sin falling away as more and more light is shed into the world.

The Celebration

1. Together make the Sign of the Cross

2. Light the Appropriate Number of Candles

- In the first week of Advent, light one purple candle.
- In the second week of Advent, light two purple candles.
- In the third week of Advent, light two purple candles and one rose candle.
- In the fourth week, light all four candles.
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Many families have adopted the following custom:

- The youngest child lights the candle in the first week.
- The oldest child lights the candles in the second week.
- The mother/female guardian lights the candles in the third week.
- The father/male guardian lights the candles in the fourth week.
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3. Pray the Advent Prayer every evening for a week. The father (or other leader) leads the family (or group) in the appropriate Advent Wreath Prayer for the week:

Advent Prayer for Week One: Bestir, O Lord, Thy might, we pray thee and come; that, defended by Thee, we may deserve rescue from approaching dangers brought on by our sins, and being set free by Thee, obtain our salvation. Who lives and reigns with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

Advent Prayer for Week Two: Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the ways of His only begotten Son, that through His coming we may be worthy to serve Thee with purified minds. Who lives and reigns, with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

Advent Prayer for Week Three: Incline Your ear to our prayers, O Lord, we beseech Thee; and make bright the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation. Who lives and reigns, with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

Advent Prayer for Week Four: Bestir, O Lord, Thy might, we beseech Thee, and come; and with great power come to our aid, that, by the help of Thy grace, that which is hindered by our sins may be hastened by Thy merciful forgiveness. Who lives and reigns, with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

4. Leave the Advent Wreath Burning

Most families light the Advent wreath before dinner and leave it burning throughout dinner. You can also light it before private or family prayer, or before engaging in an Advent devotion (Dinnertime is a perfect time to incorporate one or both of those devotions into your Advent practices.)

5. Extinguish the Candles

After dinner and/or your Advent devotions, carefully extinguish all of the candles on the Advent wreath.

6. End With the Sign of the Cross

As with all devotions, the lighting of the Advent wreath should begin and end with the Sign of the Cross.