



Church Activity Goal:

“We all go to the Mass Celebration”

Objective for the whole family before attending the mass:

- >Prepare and light the advent candle & offer a prayer. (See Pages 2-4)
- >Each child should bring his/her lighted advent wreath, on the 12 Noon Sunday Mass (Come early and put your advent wreath near the altar.)
- >Once the mass is done, get your advent wreath and get your next candle.
- >This church activity is for the four Sundays of Advent & Christmas. December 1,8,15,22, & 25.

Advent wreath meaning

The circular shape of the Advent wreath symbolizes God’s infinite love for us – it is never-ending, just like the true Light of the World, Jesus, who leads us into eternal life with Him. The materials of the Advent wreath similarly lead us to reflect on the everlasting nature of God; traditionally, Advent wreaths have been made of evergreen leaves, such as pine or fir, which maintain their green color beyond the season in which they are collected. Nowadays, there are many modern interpretations of Advent wreaths that still help us celebrate the traditional meaning of the wreath: preparing the way for the Light of the World, Jesus.

What do the four candles of Advent symbolize?

The four candles of Advent represent the four Sundays of Advent, and they respectively symbolize *hope, peace, joy, and love*. In your homes and parishes, people will light a fifth candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to represent the birth of Jesus; this candle, when added to the Advent wreath, is typically white and larger than the other candles and is placed in the center of the wreath.

Advent candle weeks, names & colors

Advent week 1 – Hope: Prophecy Candle (purple) December 1, 2024.

Advent week 2 – Peace: Bethlehem Candle (purple) December 8, 2024.

Advent week 3 – Joy: Shepherd’s Candle (pink) December 15, 2024.

Advent week 4 – Love: Angel’s Candle (purple) December 22, 2024.

Blessing of an Advent wreath (USCCB)

Time needed: 5 minutes

(Pray this blessing from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops the night before or on the first Sunday of Advent in your home.)

Make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Say, “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

Then, read Scripture from the Book of Isaiah. (Isaiah 9, Isaiah 63, or Isaiah 64.)

Pray with the following blessing written by the USCCB.

“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.

Amen.”

First Advent Candle/Sunday: Hope

(Light the candle & do the prayer with the whole family in your home before going to the mass)

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.” – C.S. Lewis

It is only fitting that the first candle on the Advent wreath represents Hope – the first Sunday of Advent not only leads us to anticipate the birth of Christ but celebrate the beginning of a new liturgical season as well. The first candle is purple, the primary color of Advent and a color symbolizing royalty. Sometimes called the “Prophecy Candle,” the first candle harkens us back to Isaiah’s foretelling of the birth of Christ and all of the promises God gave us in the Old Testament that would be fulfilled by the birth of Jesus. This Advent, light the first candle on Sunday, December 1, 2024. (Prayer Page 4)

Second Advent Candle/Sunday: Peace

(Light the candle & do the prayer with the whole family in your home before going to the mass)

“May we be in this world a ray of that light which shone forth from Bethlehem, bringing joy and peace to the hearts of all men and women.” – Pope Francis

The second candle on the Advent wreath represents Peace. Like the first candle, it is also purple. Often called the “Bethlehem Candle,” the second Advent candle reminds us of Mary and Joseph’s journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem before Mary gave birth to Jesus. Building on the meaning of the Prophecy Candle, this second candle recalls that after all of the division, destruction, and dispersion of the kingdom in the Old Testament, there might finally be peace on Earth – Jesus is coming, and so is his Kingdom of Peace. As we read in the quote from Pope Francis, this light of peace shone forth from Bethlehem for all the world. This Advent, light the second candle on Sunday, December 8, 2024. (Prayer Page 4)

Third Advent Candle/Sunday: Joy – “Gaudete Sunday”

(Light the candle & do the prayer with the whole family in your home before going to the mass)

“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.’” (Luke 2:10-12)

The third candle of Advent symbolizes Joy. As we continue to approach Christmas Day, our joy grows more and more. The third candle takes us back to the joyful anticipation of the shepherds who journeyed to see Jesus in Bethlehem, even before the wise men. On this third Sunday of Advent, which the Church calls “Gaudete Sunday,” meaning rejoice or praise, we light the third candle and rejoice like the shepherds. For this reason, the third candle of Advent is called the “Shepherd’s Candle,” and its color is pink, the liturgical color for joy. This Advent, light the third candle on Sunday, December 15, 2024. (Prayer Page 4)

Fourth Advent Candle/Sunday: Love

(Light the candle & do the prayer with the whole family in your home before going to the mass)

“And in the end, everything else will turn out to be unimportant and inessential, except for this:
Father, Child, and Love.” – St. (Pope) John Paul II

The fourth candle of Advent represents Love, the ultimate love of God that He might send His only Son for us. Called the “Angel’s Candle,” the fourth candle of Advent is lit the Sunday before Christmas, and it is the color purple, leading us to eagerly await the new Kingdom of God on earth. This Advent, light the fourth candle on Sunday, December 22, 2022. (Prayer Page 4)

Prayer for lighting Advent candles — Henri Nouwen

Each person or family might approach lighting Advent candles in a different way, which is totally okay! Some families will let different members light a candle each week and say a prayer. What matters most is that the candles remind you of the overflowing hope, peace, joy, and love that the birth of Jesus means for each of us. If you’re struggling to find the words for prayer, this Advent prayer from Fr. Henri J.M. Nouwen encapsulates what many of us feel and hope for during the Advent season:

Make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, Master of both light and darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparation for Christmas.

We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear Your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of Your Kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of Your presence.

We are Your people, walking in darkness yet seeking the light. To You, we say, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

<https://hallow.com/blog/advent-candles-and-advent-wreaths/#advent-wreaths>