

# ADVENT

## *Traditions*

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### AN ADVENT PRAYER

Lord God,  
during this time of Advent  
may your Word illuminate  
all darkness in my life.  
May one flame serve as a spark  
to ignite in me a fire of desire for you.  
May a second flame light a lamp  
by which I may find my way to you.  
May a third flame warm my heart  
so I may love as you love.  
And may a fourth flame shine so brightly  
that the world may see your Word in me.  
Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Emmanuel.  
Use me to shine forth Your Word  
to a world seeking light in the darkness.  
Amen.



## The Advent Wreath

In the  
beginning,  
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kept track  
of time

**M**arking the passage of time is what we do as humans. Using calendars, timers, clocks, and watches we are constantly keeping track of and measuring time. No wonder the Advent wreath plays such a prominent role in most of our recollections of Advents from our past.

The Advent wreath is not specifically Catholic and actually originated with Lutherans in Germany during the sixteenth century. In the beginning, it had twenty-four candles and kept track of time much like our Advent calendars filled with chocolates do today, with candles for each weekday in addition to the Sundays.





As time went by, the wreath developed into the common form we see today of four candles, but variations of the wreath still exist in many different Christian communities.

The most common form we see today has a wreath with three purple and one pink candle. A new candle is lit for each new Sunday of Advent, with the pink candle being reserved for the third Sunday, or Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete comes from the Latin root that means to rejoice. The focus is on the joy we have concerning the second coming of Jesus. When all four candles are finally lit, the hour of Christmas is then close at hand.

Will you have an Advent wreath in your own home this year? It does not have to be a real wreath and it can have any size candles. Four votive lights in a circle or even in a row on the mantle will do. The point is the marking of time, which keeps us mindful of the approaching Nativity. Any device

During Advent,  
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the joy we have  
concerning the  
second coming  
of Our Lord,  
Jesus Christ.

that helps us stay on track with our Advent preparation is good for us to use. It can be a wreath of candles for the family and Advent calendars of chocolate for the children. On second thought, a calendar full of little windows offering chocolate sounds too good to be true. A wreath for the family and chocolates for EVERYBODY!



*The Pink Candle*  
is lit on the third Sunday  
of Advent, also called  
*Gaudete Sunday*,  
which means Rejoice.



# Your Last Advent on Earth

Taken from the book *Everyday Stewardship* - Tracy Earl Welliver

*"Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"—Mark 13:33-37*

**W**aiting is not always so easy. If you lack patience, like me, you probably want whatever is going to happen to just happen already. I remember waiting on the births of my children. There was the time I sat with my dying father in the hospital. Last year we waited to see if our oldest child got into the college of his choice, or any college at all, which seemed quite nerve-wracking.

So, to make the time pass more easily, and because it is prudent and wise, we make preparations. We put together nurseries, go over last will and testaments, and look through endless college mailings. Then, when the event finally happens or our fate is unveiled, the preparation ends. Either you have prepared well for that moment, or you realize your actions didn't prepare you at all.

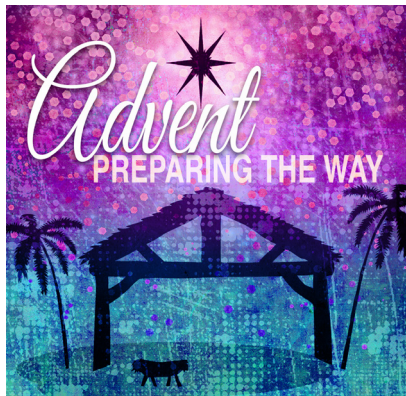
Advent comes every year. So, unlike events in our lives that only happen once, we have been through Advent many times before. Even though this is the case, when Christmas arrives many of us will think we missed it again and next year will be the year we really get into Advent. Of course, not to sound morbid, but there is no promise of next year. What if you knew this was your last Advent ever?

I read a book some years ago about how to live your life as if you only had one year to live. The author said that doing this provides incentive for a real commitment to living life to its fullest. You notice things for the first time. You make those plans that you always put off. You tell people what you always wanted to say.

I hope all who read this have many wonderful years ahead of them. However, let's approach this Advent like it is our last. I bet Christmas will seem that much sweeter. And who knows, we may find a new and improved way to live all year long.

## IDEA FOR RESPONSE

Buy two Advent wreaths. If you do not have one, place one on your table and use it. Give the second one away to a friend. If you already have one, give them both away.



# Advent Q&A

## What significance does the Advent season have for our Christian faith journey?

Advent is a season of joyful anticipation and expectation. But for what specifically? Certainly not for the birth of the Christ Child—that occurred more than two thousand years ago. This season links us with all those who lived in the era of longing for the coming of the Messiah. But he has come and lived among us.

## Then what are we joyfully anticipating and expecting?

Some are joyfully anticipating the many gifts that they will buy and share with others, along with the many gifts they will receive in return. Others enter into the overblown commercialism—decorating, partying, writing cards, and all the endless customs that go with the season.

## What if the anticipation and expectation were to focus on how we can continue to make present the living Christ in each and every moment of our daily lives?

Yes, Jesus came among us two thousand years ago. But how do we continue to make that presence real in our world? Jesus himself set the agenda for us. We are to proclaim good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, provide food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, freedom for those who are oppressed and abused. What would the Advent season look like if this, rather than materialism, was the main focus of our joyful anticipation and expectation? Try it and see what results. It may surprise all of us.





# KIDS' *Corner*

G R O W I N G   W I T H   T H E   G O S P E L

Read the Gospel and Color

Lord, help me  
love you above  
all and love my  
neighbor as  
myself.

Be ready for Jesus to come at a moment's notice. Love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself. Forgive yourself and others seventy times seven times or more. Get a good night's sleep. Share good words with your family. Ask God to walk with you and help you each day. Then you will be ready for when Jesus comes back.

*God loves you  
very much.*



**Mission for the Week:** I will think of good things when I eat.