

Blessing and Prayers for Advent Wreath

During the Advent season families should spend time together preparing for the approaching celebration of the birth of Christ. An Advent wreath can be a great focal point for family prayers and holiday celebrations.

An Advent wreath is a wreath of laurel, spruce or similar foliage with four candles that are lighted successively in the weeks of Advent to symbolize the light that the birth of Christ brought into the world. Traditionally three of the candles are purple, the colour of kings and of penance. A rose-coloured candle is used to mark the Third Sunday of Advent as a time to rejoice over the closeness of Christmas and the coming of Christ.

Children love the beauty of the simple traditional ceremony. Lighting candles in an Advent Wreath is a simple way to start a tradition of family worship in the home. Those who participate will cherish the experience all their lives.

Prayer:

Each day your family should gather around the Advent wreath, generally before the evening meal. The proper number of candles are then lighted and a prayer is said.

BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

It starts at the evening meal on the Saturday before the first Sunday in Advent with the blessing of the wreath. (The head of the household is the one designated to say the prayers, following which various members of his family light the candles. If the group is not a family, then a leader may be selected to say the prayers and others appointed to light the candles.) The following prayer can be used.

Leader: In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: O God, by whose Word all things are sanctified, pour forth Your blessing upon this wreath and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from You abundant graces. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The wreath would then be sprinkled with water. Then follows the prayer which is said before the evening meal each night of the first week in Advent.

Advent Hymn Can be sung.

FIRST WEEK *The following prayer should be repeated each day during the first week. After the prayer, the family's youngest child lights the first purple candle then any Advent Hymn can be sung then a decade of the Rosary can be said. (Family members can also take turns lighting and blowing out the candles on each night.)*

Leader: O Lord, stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, and come, That by Thy protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins and saved by Thy deliverance. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Candle is Lit. Advent Hymn is sung. The candle is allowed to burn during evening meals for the first week.

SECOND WEEK *The prayer that follows is to be repeated each day of the second week. After the prayer, the oldest child lights the first and second purple candles.*

Leader: O Lord, stir up our hearts that we may prepare for Thy only begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with pure minds. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Any Advent Hymn can be sung followed by a decade of the Rosary.

The two candles are allowed to burn during the evening meals of the second week.

THIRD WEEK *The joyful Sunday in Advent (known as "Gaudete") is represented by rose (or pink) instead of the penitential purple colour. Each night during the third week the mother of the family lights the pink, as well as the two previously burned purple candles, after the following prayer has been said.*

Leader: O Lord, we beg Thee, incline Thy ear to our prayers and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Any Advent Hymn can be sung followed by a decade of the Rosary.

The three candles are allowed to burn during the evening meals of the third week.

FOURTH WEEK *The prayer that follows is to be repeated each day of the fourth week. After the prayer, the father lights all four candles.*

Leader: O Lord, stir up Thy power, we pray Thee, and come; and with great might help us, that with the help of Thy Grace, Thy merciful forgiveness may hasten what our sins impede. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Any Advent Hymn can be sung followed by a decade of the Rosary.

The four candles are allowed to burn during the evening meals of the fourth week.

After the fourth week, the penitential season of Advent is over and the time to rejoice is at hand.

In addition to having an Advent wreath as part of your family's Christmas celebration, create your own Advent calendar of actions you and your family can take each day to bring you closer to Christ. Write the schedule activities on a calendar that is prominently posted. These activities could include donating toys to a drive for needy children, bringing used clothing to a collection for homeless people, volunteering at a soup kitchen, reading a Christmas poem or story aloud, attending Mass together or placing a crèche in your home.