

THE ADVENT WREATH

One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting amid growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly an image of ever-lasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayers around the wreath.

First Sunday of Advent

Use this blessing when lighting the first candle.

Praise to you, O God, our salvation who is near.

You hold us in our waiting and keep us awake to the world.

You show up in our lives at unexpected times.

Bless us as we light this candle to keep vigil for your arrival.

We trust that even though we do not know the day or the hour,
you hurry to gather all people to your peace.

Amen.

Second Sunday of Advent

Use this blessing when lighting two candles.

Praise to you, O God, who gives us courage to start again.

You fasten righteousness around your waist
and baptize with the Holy Spirit's fire.

Bless us as we mirror your mighty fire in these simple flames,
and teach us to mirror your justice in the paths we prepare.

We ask that peace abound,
until none hurt or destroy over all the earth.

Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent

Use this blessing when lighting three candles.

Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow.

You bring water to parched ground and life out of death.

Bless us as this light grows,
and send sorrow and sighing to flee away.

Give us strength and patience,
trusting that you are true to your promises.

Transform the lives of all who suffer
with your wonders near at hand.

Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Use this blessing when lighting all four candles.

Praise to you, O God, who lives with us,
sharing our flesh and bones.

As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed,
so we wait and dream for you.

Bless us and let your face shine upon us,
more radiant than these candles,
and more dear than all else we seek.

Restore us when we fail to refuse the evil and choose the good,
and banish all our fears.

We pray in the name of Emmanuel,
your promised child and our Savior.

Amen.

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