

# Advent Wreath

*Family Prayer for Family Times* by Kathleen O'Connell Chesto 1995 Twenty Third Publications

An Advent wreath is a green circular wreath with four candles, one of which is lit on each of the Sundays in Advent. This custom became popular in Germany during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and was brought to the United States by German immigrants. The advent wreath symbolizes the many years that the people of Israel waited in darkness for the coming of the Savior, and illustrates our waiting during the Advent season, to once again celebrate Jesus' birth into the world.

You can make an Advent wreath by decorating a Styrofoam or florist's ring with live greens (fir branches are good, but anything that's available in your area will do), along with four candles. The candles on the wreath are traditionally three purple and one pink, but they can all be white or all dark blue, as well. Enhance your wreath with pinecones, ribbons, or other decorations, if desired. You can also purchase ready-made wreaths, so don't let a lack of time or creativity rob you of the opportunity for sharing this tradition.

Plan your Advent wreath ritual for each of the four Sundays in Advent, or for the Saturday evening before. In our house, we always lit the candles on our Advent wreath as part of our grace before meals. And because our children enjoyed this custom, we lit the candles every night, not just on Sunday or Saturday evening.

Here follows a simple ritual for blessing the wreath and for lighting the candles. If you want to celebrate Advent every night, use a line from that week's ritual, such as the opening line. If your family is uncomfortable with the blessing, just do the simple prayer of lighting.

This blessing is done only on the first Sunday of Advent. Before you begin, lower the lights in the room to emphasize the darkness that occurred before the coming of Christ.

*Leader: Just as the world waited in darkness for the Messiah, the light of the world, we wait in the ever-darkening days of winter for the coming of Jesus.*

*Reader: A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah (9: 2 – 3): The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of shadow, a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.*

**All: Thanks be to God.**

*Leader: Lord, bless our Advent prayer. Remind us daily of all who wait in darkness for your coming. Give each of us the courage to make your light shine forth in the world. We ask this in the name of your Son, whose coming we await.*

**All: Amen.**

### **First Week**

One Candle will be lit this week.

**All: Lord, we gather with all those who waited one thousand years for your coming.**

*Leader: Come, Lord Jesus.*

**All: Come and be born in our hearts.**

*Leader: Isaiah, you promised us a light to shine in our darkness.*

**All: Teach us to wait in patience and to prepare with joy.**

One child is chosen to light the candle each night. This child will also extinguish the candle at the end of the meal, and say to the family...

Child: Carry the light in your hearts.

### **Second Week**

This week, light the first candle and a new one.

**All: Lord, we gather with all those who waited two thousand years for your coming.**

*Leader: Come, Lord Jesus.*

**All: Come and be born in our hearts.**

*Leader: John the Baptist, you announced the coming of Jesus.*

**All: Teach us to wait in patience and prepare with joy.**

Continue the practice of having one of the children light the candles, then extinguish them at the end of the meal, saying...

Child: Carry the light in your hearts.

### **Third Week**

Light the candles from the previous two weeks, along with a new one. If you are using purple and pink candles, the pink one is lit on this Sunday, called Gaudete Sunday, when the reading anticipate the joy of the birth of Jesus.

**All: Lord, we gather with all those who waited three thousand years for your coming.**

*Leader: Come, Lord Jesus.*

**All: Come and be born in our hearts.**

*Leader: Joseph, you trusted Mary, supporting and protecting her.*

**All: Teach us to wait in patience and prepare with joy.**

On extinguishing the candles...

Child: Carry the light in your hearts.

### **Fourth Week**

All four candles are lit.

**All: Lord, we gather with those who waited four thousand years for your coming.**

*Leader: Come, Lord Jesus.*

**All: Come and be born in our hearts.**

*Leader: Mary, you believed, and trusted, and waited on the Lord.*

**All: Teach us to wait in patience and prepare with joy.**

On extinguishing the candles...

Child: Carry the light in your hearts.