

The Advent Wreath Daily Devotions

The Advent Wreath



Originally the Advent wreath might have been a cart wheel, wound with greens and decorated with lights, strung up in the halls of the sun worshipping tribes of Northern Europe. To appease their “hidden” god during the darkest winter days they took a wheel from their cart, sacrificing, as it were, its use, while they pondered about the blessings of light and life and implored the sun god to return to them. Eventually the early Church adopted this practice and Christianized it.

The wreath without beginning or end stands for eternity; the greens for life and growth; the four candles represent the ages “sitting in darkness and the shadow of death”, each candle adding more light until, on Christmas, the light from the wreath sets off, as it were, the blaze of light on the “tree of life”, the Christmas tree, for the time is fulfilled.

And so, the burning candles remind us of the shortness of time until Christmas, that Christ will come again in judgment and that his light is the true light that dispels the darkness of sin. The pink candle is in honour of our Lord’s Mother and is to remind us of her obedience and how we should follow her example.

How to make it

You will need four or five good evergreen branches, four candles (three purple and one pink), four candle holders, a hoop of some sort, and a few yards of purple ribbon if you wish. The hoop could be a barrel hoop, willows or reeds tied into shape; or even bent coat hangers; anything that will give a solid foundation for your wreath. The greens can be tied to the hoop and the candles spaced equally around the wreath. If you wish to hang your wreath it needs to be fairly rigid and the candleholders need to be firmly attached. If you hang it, purple ribbon, cord, or sash chain all work well. If you have no place to hang the wreath, it can sit on a small table by itself or in the center of the dinner table, and the greens can be arranged in a circle around the four candles; in this case, they don’t need to be tied. It might be a good idea to set the wreath on a tray or a piece of plywood so that it can be moved during the season without disturbing it.

After Advent

You can refresh the wreath with new greens; and, if you wish, replace the four candles with four white candles that can be burned until the end of the Christmas season at Epiphany. Another tradition is to place a large white candle in the center of the wreath at Christmas as the “Christ Candle” and burn all five for the rest of the season.

The Ceremony of the Wreath

The blessing of the wreath should take place the eve of the first Sunday in Advent. The whole family should take part in the preparation of the wreath. Before the evening meal the head of the household leads the ceremony in the presence of the entire family. The following prayers are suggested:

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

Others: **Who made heaven and earth.**

Leader: Let us Pray.

O GOD, by whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth thy blessing upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from Thee abundant graces. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The First Week

One purple candle is lighted by the youngest child and left burning during the evening meal, and this prayer is offered daily:

O LORD, stir up thy power, we beg thee, and come; that by Thy protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins and be saved by Thy deliverance. Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

With this prayer, the following readings may be used. The complete set of readings from the Gospel of St. Mark maybe used by those who are able. These can be found on page *xvi* of the Book of Common Prayer (Canada, 1962).

Sunday

The Lord Jesus Christ invites us to prayer and watchfulness as we await the promise of His coming. *Matthew 24:3, 26-27*

Monday

The call and Ministry of St. John the Baptist. *Mark 1: 1-8*

Tuesday

The Baptism of our Lord. *Mark 1: 9-13*

Wednesday

The Lord Jesus calls sinners to repentance. *Mark 2: 15-17*

Thursday

The Lord Jesus Christ our Heavenly Bridegroom. *Mark 2: 19-22*

Friday

Our Lord calls His Holy Apostles. *Mark 3: 13-19*

Saturday

The parable of the sower. *Mark 4: 1-20*

The Second Week

Two purple candles are lighted by the oldest child during this week, and this prayer is offered daily:

O LORD, stir up our hearts that we may prepare the way of thine only Begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with purified minds. Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

With this prayer, the following readings may be used:

Sunday

Our Lord calls us to keep watch over our hearts and be found faithful. *Matthew 24: 42-46*

Monday

A parable about the Kingdom of God. *Mark 4: 30-33*

Tuesday

The Lord by His Divine power casts out demons. *Mark 5: 1-8*

Wednesday

The Lord Jesus brings healing to a believing woman. *Mark 5: 25-34*

Thursday

The Holy Apostles go forth to announce the Kingdom of God. *Mark 6: 7-12*

Friday

The death of St. John the Baptist. *Mark 6: 22-29*

Saturday

The sick reach out to the Lord Jesus for healing. *Mark 6: 54-56*

The Third Week

Two purple candles and the pink one are lighted by the Mother during the week, and this prayer is offered daily:

O LORD, we beseech Thee, incline thine ear to our prayers and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation. Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

With this prayer, the following readings may be used:

Sunday

The parable of the Virgins. *Matthew 25: 1-13*

Monday

Our Lord teaches us about our sinful hearts. *Mark 7: 20-23*

Tuesday

The Lord casts out an unclean spirit. *Mark 7: 25-30*

Wednesday

The feeding of the multitude. *Mark 8: 1-9*

Thursday

The Lord Jesus calls us to follow Him in love and obedience. *Mark 8: 34-38*

Friday

A call to forsake everything that would keep us from the Kingdom of God. *Mark 9: 43-50*

Saturday

The Lord calls us to meekness and humility. *Mark 10: 13-16*

The Fourth Week

All four candles are lighted by the Father during this week, and this prayer is offered daily:

O LORD, we beseech Thee, stir up Thy power and come; and with Thy great might deliver us, that with the help of Thy grace, Thy merciful forgiveness may hasten what our sins impede. Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

With this prayer, the following readings may be used:

Sunday

The Lord Jesus Christ calls us to bless others as a way of service to Him. *Matthew 25: 44-46*

Monday

The Lord foretells His blessed Passion and Death. *Mark 10: 32-34*

Tuesday

The entry of our Blessed Lord into the Holy City of Jerusalem. *Mark 11: 1-10*

Wednesday

The Lord teaches us the importance of prayer and faith. *Mark 11: 22-26*

Thursday

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches about the commandments. *Mark 12: 28-34*

Friday

Our Blessed Lord warns us not to be led astray by false teachers. *Mark 13: 5-8*

Saturday

A call to vigilance and hope as we await the coming of our Lord and Saviour in power and glory.
Mark 13: 32-37

THE “O” ANTHEMS

The Anthems are used before and after the Magnificat (*p. 24, BCP*) at Evening Prayer from December 16 until December 24. They proclaim the titles of Our Lord except for the one for December 23, which is addressed to Mary. They have been used by the faithful since the 4th century and are a fitting way to prepare for Christmas. In the Advent Wreath devotions they may follow Prayer for the week.

December 16th

O Sapientia (Wisdom) which came out of the mouth of the Most High, and reached from one end to another, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.

December 17th

O Adonia (Lord or Master) and leader of the house of Israel, who appeared in the bush of Moses in a flame of fire, and gave him the Law in Sinai: Come and deliver us with an outstretched arm.

December 18th

O Root of Jesse, which stands for an ensign of the people, at whom all kings shall shut their mouths, to whom the Gentiles shall seek: Come and deliver us and tarry not.

December 19th

O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, that opens, and no man shuts, and shuts, and no man opens: Come and bring the prisoner out of the prison house.

December 20th

O Day-Spring, Brightness of Light Everlasting and Sun of Righteousness: Come and enlighten him that sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 21th

O King of Nations, and their desire: The Cornerstone, who made both one: Come and save mankind, whom thou formed of clay.

December 22nd

O Emanuel (God with us) our King and Lawgiver, the Desire of all the nations, and their Salvation: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

December 23rd

O Virgin of virgins, how shall this be? For neither before thee was any like thee, nor shall there be after. Daughters of Jerusalem, why marvel ye at me? The thing which ye behold is a divine mystery.

December 24th

Today read *St Matthew 1:18-21*. This night you will witness these great things that are now to happen. With the Angels and your family in his Holy Church, give thanks to God for the great gift of his Son.