

## Advent Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things, look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways, long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy, seek the joy of your presence.

We who are your people, walk in darkness, yet seek the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" AMEN

Henri J.M. Nouwen

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### Advent Defined:

In Latin, the word **Advent** is defined as "to come to." Advent is the beginning of the church year for most churches. The four-week period before Christmas is known as Advent. Advent lasts anywhere from twenty-one to twenty-eight days. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas.

### Advent Wreath Explained:

The **Advent wreath** is a circle made out of **evergreens** and four candles. Traditionally, three of the candles are violet and one is rose, but the color of the candles is not essential. The rose candle is used on the third Sunday of Advent. Rose is used to symbolize that Christmas is near, and you should rejoice. The third Sunday is also known as "Gaudete" which means "rejoice" in Latin. Rose colored vestments are worn.

Catholics use an **Advent wreath** to signify the weeks in the season of advent. The Advent wreath represents living in spiritual darkness, waiting for Jesus to light the world. Many Catholic families have Advent wreaths in their homes. Advent wreaths are good to have because they make you slow down and concentrate on the meaning of Christmas.

Each day during Advent the candles are lit. During the first week, only one candle is lit daily. An additional candle is lit for each succeeding week.

## Advent Wreath Symbolism:



The **evergreens** symbolize continuous life. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life **ALL** found in Christ. Any pine cones, nuts, or seedpods used to decorate the wreath also symbolize life and resurrection. All together, the wreath of evergreens depicts the immortality of our soul and the new, everlasting life promised to us through Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, who entered our world becoming true man and who was victorious over sin and death through His own passion, death, and resurrection.

The **four candles** represent the four weeks of Advent. Three candles are purple and one is rose. The purple candles are symbolic of prayer, penance and sacrifices that Christians undertake at this time of the year in preparation for the coming of Christ. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday and it represents our closeness to Christmas and the coming of Christ. The light signifies the coming of Christ the Light of the World. Today some people include a white candle or an Easter candle in the middle of the wreath and it represents Christ and is lit on Christmas Eve, the evening we celebrate his birth.

## THE ADVENT WREATH CELEBRATION

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

**All:** Who has made Heaven and earth.

**Leader:** Let us pray: O God, by whose word all things are made holy, pour forth your blessings upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

**All:** Amen.



**Leader:** The Lord is our faith and our life.

**All:** May the Lord's peace be with us all.

**Leader:** And His love shine in our hearts.

**(One purple candle is lit)**

**Leader:** Father in Heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in our faith so that the day of His coming may find us prepared and filled with longing.

**All:** Amen



## Second Week

**Leader:** May the Lord's peace be with us all.

**All:** The Lord is our faith and our life.

**Leader:** May His love shine in our hearts.

**All:** Our hope is in the coming of the Lord.

**(Two purple candles are lit)**

**Leader:** Let us pray, that we may experience fully the peace of Christ.

**Leader:** Father in Heaven, the day draws near when the birth of your Son will make radiant the night of the waiting world. May his quiet coming fill us with true inner peace.

**All:** Amen.

## Third Week

**Leader:** May the Lord's love shine in our hearts.

**All:** And may His peace be with us all.

**Leader:** The Lord is our faith and our life.

**All:** Our hope is in the coming of the Lord.

**(Two purple candles and the rose-coloured candle are lit)**

**Leader:** Let us pray, that we may grow in love for each other as the Lord comes to us.

**Leader:** Father in Heaven, may we your family who look forward to the birthday of Christ experience the joy of your love and celebrate His birth with a new sense of love for each other.

**All:** Amen.



## FOURTH WEEK

**Leader:** Our hope is in the coming of the Lord.

**All:** May His love shine in our hearts.

**Leader:** And may the Lord's peace be with us all.

**All:** The Lord is our hope and our life.

**(All four candles are lit)**

**Leader:** Let us pray, that the newborn Savior will bring us His love which lasts forever.

**Leader:** Lord, our minds and hearts are filled with hope. We long to hear the voice which tells us of the coming of the Christ Child.

**All:** Amen.

For the Christmas Season which follows immediately after Advent, candles and ribbons can be changed to white. If you wish, the wreath itself can be freshened with new greens and decorated festively for use during the holiday period. Lighting all four candles to burn throughout the Christmas Season is a customary and appropriate practice.

*“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the World; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.””*

**John 8:12**

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