About Advent

The weeks leading up to Christmas are filled with holiday songs, seasonal sales, decorations, lights, and lots of Advent wreaths and candles. Why? What is it that we're celebrating? What is Advent?



The Definition of Advent

The word "advent" (the arrival of an important person or thing) is derived from the Latin word "adventus," which means "coming." For Catholics, Advent is the four-week season leading up to Christmas. During Advent we anticipate the coming of Jesus. It's a time full of reflection, excitement, and hope.

The Meaning of Advent

Advent, at its heart, is about getting ready to encounter Jesus at Christmas. Opening our hearts to him. Getting to know him. Becoming a better husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter, friend, etc.

Typically, we associate Advent with Jesus' birth two thousand years ago. We also reflect on Jesus' promise to return at the end of time. When he comes, he wants to bring us back to heaven with him. The Advent season is about getting ready for his coming by reflecting on what's important and how to become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

With the busyness of the holiday season, it's easy to get distracted by the shopping, decorations, and endless to-do lists. The most important things are hardly ever urgent. Advent is a time for us to take a step back, slow down, and focus on what's really important in life.

When Does Advent Begin?

Advent officially begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on December 24. It marks the beginning of the Catholic Church's calendar year. Advent 2017 starts Dec 3, 2017.

What Is an Advent Wreath?

During Advent and Christmas, festively decorated evergreen wreaths hang in windows and on doors everywhere. In many homes and churches, it's also common to see special wreaths lying on tables or ledges, adorned with 4 candles (usually 3 purple and 1 pink). This familiar symbol of the season is the Advent wreath.

Traditionally, the Advent wreath is a circle of evergreen branches. Both the evergreen branches and the circular shape symbolize the passing of time and eternal life. The shape of the wreath, with no beginning or end, reflects the complete and endless love that Jesus has for us. During the Advent season, we anticipate his coming and the promise of eternal life in heaven with him.

The Meaning of Advent Candles



As a Christian tradition, the wreath holds the four Advent candles. The candles represent Jesus coming as the light in darkness. One candle is lit each Sunday until all four candles are lit, and sometimes a fifth candle is lit on Christmas. As Christmas draws nearer, each candle brings a little more light into the darkness. Each of the candles represents an aspect of preparation during the season of Advent:

1. The Candle of Hope *Color: Purple* Purple is the primary color associated with Advent. Within the Catholic Church it symbolizes penance, preparation, and sacrifice. During the first week of Advent, we look forward to Jesus' coming with hope.
2. The Candle of Peace *Color: Purple* During this second week of Advent, we reflect on our lives and work on becoming better-versions-of-ourselves in preparation for Jesus' coming.
3. The Candle of Joy *Color: Pink* This third candle is pink, symbolizing anticipation and rejoicing. During the third week of Advent, we are filled with joy for the near arrival of Jesus on Christmas day.
4. The Candle of Love *Color: Purple* During this final week of Advent we rejoice in the endless love that God has for us, which is made apparent in the birth of his Son: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." - John 3:16-17

This Advent, we want to help you prepare for Christmas in a new way. We prepare for everything important in life, and that includes Christmas. We shop for gifts, bake cookies, decorate our trees, and visit family and friends until we're ready to drop. This year, slow down and focus on what matters most. Join Dynamic Catholic's free email program Best Advent Ever: Rediscover Christmas. You'll receive . . .

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