

## ADVENT-A SEASON OF GRACE

Advent is a time of waiting—waiting for the coming of Christ once again into our hearts and lives through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us.

The word ADVENT means “coming.” Christians know and celebrate the season of Advent as a time of preparation and reflection in anticipation of Christmas, the celebration of Christ’s birth. Throughout the Advent season, Christians also acknowledge and anticipate the promised second coming of Jesus Christ.

Much like the season of Lent, Advent is thought of as a time of penitence and preparation for the coming of the King. As we ponder and anticipate the festival of Christmas, we can think of this coming in three ways:

1-The season of Advent represents the coming of the King as a human child. In the form of a baby, wrapped in cloth and laid to rest in a manger of straw, Jesus came to us. We commemorate this event on Christmas Day.

2-The season of Advent fills us with the coming of the King in Word and Spirit, about which we witness and for which we live the year round.

3-The season of Advent invites us to reflect on the second coming of the King—that time when Jesus will return in glory at the end of time as we know it.

Many people observe Advent, this time of preparation, with an Advent wreath. Five colorful candles stand in the circle of evergreen. Although there are variations in the colors of the candles, most often there are three purple, one pink and one white. The purple represents repentance, the pink, joy, and the central white candle represents Christ.

THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE-This candle is called the “Candle of Hope.” This purple candle symbolizes hope and expectation. Because it points to the promises that foretold Christ’s birth, it is also sometimes called the “Candle of Prophecy.”

THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE- This candle is called the “Candle of the Way.” This candle is also purple and represents the truth that Christ is the only way to God. It is also called the “Candle of Preparation,” reminding Christians to get ready to receive God.

THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE- This third candle is the “Candle of Joy.” This pink or rose-colored candle recalls the angels joyfully singing about the birth of Christ. It reminds us that the only lasting joy to be found on earth is through relationship with God, through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE- This candle is the “Candle of Love.” This purple candle reminds us that God loves us enough to send His only Son to earth. It is sometimes called the “Candle of Peace” because it reminds us that Jesus comes to bring peace to both the world and people’s hearts. Without Christ there is no peace in this world.

THE FIFTH ADVENT CANDLE-The fifth candle is the "Christ Candle." It is a large white pillar candle that goes in the middle of the Advent wreath. It symbolizes Jesus Christ Himself, reminding us that He was willing to give up His throne in heaven and become one of us so that we might be reconciled to God our Father. It puts us in remembrance that He is now seated in heaven at the right hand of His Father.

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*CHILD OF BETHLEHEM PRAYER*

BY POPE JOHN XXIII

*O sweet Child of Bethlehem,  
Grant that we may share with all our hearts  
In this profound mystery of Christmas.  
Put into the hearts of men and women this peace  
For which they sometimes seek so desperately  
And which You alone can give to them.  
Help them to know one another better,  
And to live as brothers and sisters,  
Children of the same Father.  
Reveal to them also Your beauty, holiness, and purity.  
Awaken in their hearts  
Love and gratitude for Your infinite goodness.  
Join them all together in Your love.  
And give us Your heavenly peace. AMEN*