

Meditations around the Wreath

By Fr Moe



Over the years I have accumulated some interesting points of meditation concerning the Advent Wreath. Since I can't remember where I originally read or learned these things, I cannot give you my sources except that my (feeble) mind somehow holds these things with fading clarity.

The dark color or purple of Advent has a two-fold significance. The Church in her wisdom sanctifies the season where the days grow dark and we pine for the longer, warmer days of summer. The candles represent the dark ages that have been begging for the light of the long awaited Messiah. Yet, these dark ages are not without their shining lights. The first candle represents the first epoch which spanned the time of Adam to Noah. Indeed, Noah and Adam are key "lights" that mark that first period of God's revelation as life giver and savior.

The second candle shines as the epoch of Noah to Abraham. It is in these that the bright light of the Covenant between God and his people is crafted. Though sin continues to darken the landscape of God's creation, in this epoch, God has revealed himself as every faithful in a covenant bond with *His* people.

The third candle illuminates the epoch of Abraham to Moses. It marks the time when the people of Israel are in the darkness of slavery. God calls Moses to light the way to freedom from Pharaoh into the Promised Land thus revealing himself as the definitive savior of his people. This candle, being pink, refers to Joyful Sunday, where we are past the halfway point of the darkness that has marked world history. We can now joyfully anticipate the brilliance of the Messiah that is beginning to show on the horizon like the first rays of the dawn.

The fourth candle recalls the epoch of Moses to David. David is the light who prefigured the Messiah as the great king that would bring peace to Israel, victory over enemies and prosperity to the land.

These four epoch culminate in the white "Christ Candle" that is often at the center of the Wreath. It is lit on Christmas Eve and becomes the definitive dominating light—Jesus Christ, Savior, Messiah, the "light that shines on in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" (Jn. 1:5)

Surround our candles is the "evergreen" which is a symbol of the everlasting life promised by our Savior Jesus. Its circular pattern is symbolic of a "hole in the sky." The Hebrew people, not having the tools of astronomy understood that there was a dome over the earth. This dome literally held back the water until God would open hatches or portholes in the sky to let the rain come down. This concept is illustrated by a wonderful Advent passage from the Prophet Isaiah, 64:1, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—."