



Advent Wreath Activity Center

Family Handout

Adults and children will learn the meaning of the Advent wreath and create one for home use.

Instructions:

- ✦ Gather the following items: a Styrofoam circle, four candles (three purple and one pink), evergreen branches, and ribbon for trim.
- ✦ Write your name on the bottom of the Styrofoam circle.
- ✦ Imagining that the circle is a compass, place one candle at north, one at south, one at east, and one at west.
- ✦ Arrange the evergreens around the circle, attaching them to the Styrofoam. Decorate with ribbons.



The Story of the Advent Wreath

Advent wreaths were originally part of folk traditions of Northern Europe. Wreaths of evergreens were decorated with candles to symbolize life and light during the dark months of winter. Legend has it that Saint Boniface first gave the wreath its Christian meaning in the eighth century, and we have been using these wreaths as part of our Advent preparation ever since.

The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God. The evergreens signify continuous life. Each of the four candles represents one of the Sundays of Advent. The purple candles represent the prayer, penance, preparation, and good works we are called to do during Advent. The color purple signifies the “royalty” of Jesus Christ.

The pink candle is lit on the Third Sunday of Advent, which is the Sunday of rejoicing. The light of the candles reminds us that Jesus comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. We gradually add more light each Sunday until Christ, our Light, comes at Christmas.





Blessing the Advent Wreath

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Many families begin Advent with a short prayer service to bless the Advent wreath. On the first Sunday of Advent, you may wish to use the following prayer service to bless the wreath you have made.

To prepare, choose one person to lead the service and another to read aloud from Scripture. Open the Bible to Philippians 4:4–7. (*Other good Advent passages are Isaiah 11:1–4, Isaiah 61:1–2, Mark 1:1–8, and James 5:7–10.*)

Place the Advent wreath on a table and have your family gather around it. Lower the lights to create an appropriate atmosphere for the blessing. Light a single candle for the first week of Advent.

Leader: This week we begin the season of Advent, when the days grow short and darkness closes in. We are preparing to celebrate at Christmas the birth of Jesus, who is the light of the world.

(Pause a few moments and then pray the Sign of the Cross.)

Leader: Lord God, bless this wreath and bless us as well. May this wreath remind us of the hope and joy that Jesus brings to the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Reader: A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4–7

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

All: Amen.

(Pray the Lord's Prayer and continue with the prayer for the First Week of Advent.)





Advent Wreath Prayers

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As you gather to light your Advent wreath, use the following prayers to focus your reflection. When praying the last sentence, trace a Sign of the Cross on your forehead, lips, and heart, as we do at Mass before the Gospel reading.

First Week of Advent: purple

Jesus, as we wait for your coming, help us not to be afraid and to trust in you. As we light this candle, we remember that you bring the light of hope into our lives. May your Word be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

Amen.

Second Week of Advent: purple

Jesus, John the Baptist told the people, “If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn’t have any. If you have food, share it with someone else.” As we light this candle, we remember that you bring the light of service into our lives. May your Word be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

Amen.

Third Week of Advent: pink

Jesus, we gather here as a family to dedicate our lives to you, as John the Baptist did. Help us to know, love, and serve you. As we light this candle, we remember that you bring the light of joy into our lives. May your Word be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

Amen.

Fourth Week of Advent: purple

Jesus, your mother, Mary, is “blessed among women.” We are happy that she said “Yes!” to being your mother. As we light this candle, we remember that you bring the light of love into our lives. May your Word be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

Amen.

