

1ST WEEK OF ADVENT



Advent Wreath & Advent Candles



The Advent wreath is a crown, symbolizing the crown of Christ our King and the crown that waits for you—if you want it. God will not force anyone to take the crown, but if you want it, you must work for it. The Epistle of the 1st Sunday of Advent tells us to wake up and work: *“And that knowing the season; that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in partying and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.”* (Romans 13:11-14).

Let us remind ourselves that we do not belong to this world, but we belong to Christ, and, just as the the Gospel of the 1st Sunday of Advent said, Jesus will come one day as our Judge. That day is the day of our death. Some die old, some die young: like St. Dominic Savio (14 years old); St. Maria Goretti (11); Ven. Anne de Guigne (10) and many more. What is important is not when we die, but that we die prepared to meet our Judge. This life, like Advent, is not a time of fun and games, but a time of preparation for Jesus’ coming. At Christmas He comes seeking a home in our hearts; at our death He comes to judge our hearts. Now is the time of mercy; then will be the time of justice. Let us not waste our time in play, but let us pray!

The wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying continuous never-ending life. Even these evergreens have a traditional meaning: The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering; pine, holly, and yew, signify immortality; and cedar signifies strength and healing.

The Holly also has a special Christian symbolism: The prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns, and one English legend tells of how the Cross was made of holly. 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 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, 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. A tradition is that each Advent week represents one thousand years, and the four weeks add up to the 4,000 years from Adam and Eve until the Birth of the Savior. Three candles are purple and one is rose—these have several meanings.

The purple candles can symbolize prayer, penance and sacrifices which are painful; and the rose candle means good works, which are less painful. Another interpretation has the purple candles representing the chief male characters of Advent: Isaias, St. John the Baptist and St. Joseph; with the rose candle representing Our Lady.

The flame on each candle signifies Christ, the Light of the world and of each soul. Some traditions include a white candle placed in the middle of the wreath, which represents Jesus Christ, and is lit on Christmas Eve.

