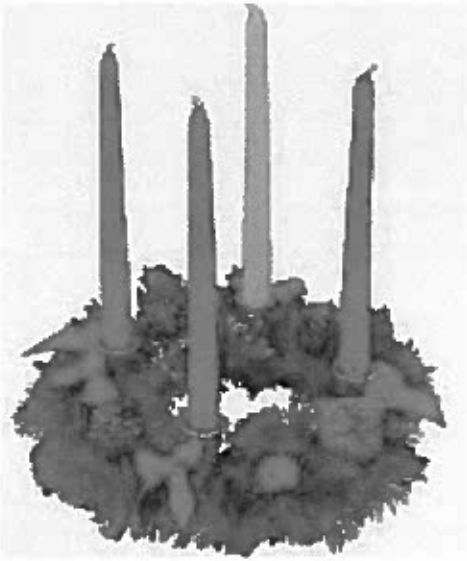


# The Advent Wreath



\* Candles of other colors may be used for the Advent Wreath. Some families like to use purple, which stands for preparation. Others green, which stands for hope. Red denotes that the Nativity is festive and Gold proclaims the glory of God.

Many prepare for Christmas with an Advent Wreath in their home. This old German custom is beautiful because it is deeply bound in symbols and prayer. The circle of the wreath is the symbol of eternity and the eternal God. The evergreen is the sign of hope in our redeemer. There are four candles, one for each week in advent and they remind us that Christ, the Light of the World is coming. Three of the candles are white\* for divine innocence and one is rose to match the vestments used in Advent reminding us of the joy that is almost here.

The Advent Wreath involves the family not only in the construction of the wreath, but in the daily recitation of a short prayer throughout advent. The wreath may be simple or elaborate according to your creativity and time. A "live" wreath is the most beautiful seasonal decoration you can have in your home, but indoors, the cuttings of "crow's foot", an evergreen creeper, or princess pine may not last the entire four weeks. Artificial evergreen and pine look very real and may be more practical. In our local stores, we have seen the base for the wreath made of heavy wire with four built-in candle holders. It is a simple task to attach the fresh evergreen to this wire base. But you may want to set the arrangement inside a circular pan of water or wet sand.. Artificial plastic evergreen branches are also easily attached to the wire base.

The ribbon is purple and it denotes the "preparation" aspect of the season. We are to be aware of our sins at this time and be sorry for them, but we should emphasize more the longing in our hearts to renew the mystery of His birth and also to become ready for the glorious moment of His Second Coming...

On the first Sunday of Advent, the family gathers together around the wreath for the blessing of the wreath by the father...

Father: "Our help is in the name of the Lord."

All: "Who made heaven and earth."

Father: "Let us pray..O God, by Whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth Your blessing upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from Your abundant graces. Through Christ our Lord." All: "Amen."

Then the father sprinkles holy water over the wreath. He proceeds to read the prayer for the first week. Each night during this week members of the family take turns reading the prayer and lighting the candle. On the second Sunday, two candles are lit. The third Sunday, the rose candle and on the fourth Sunday, all the candles are lit while the prayers are recited.

**FIRST WEEK** Leader: "O Lord, we pray You, stir up Your power and come, that by Your protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins, and to be saved by Your deliverance." All: "Amen."

Sing: "O come, O come, Emmanuel--and ransom captive Israel. That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel."

**SECOND WEEK** Leader: "Move our hearts, O Father, to prepare the way of Your only begotten Son, that we may serve you with purified minds, through His advent." All: "Amen." (Sing, "O Come Emmanuel")

**THIRD WEEK** Leader: "Incline Your ear to our prayers, we beseech You, O Lord, and brighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Your visitation.. Through Christ, our Lord." All: "Amen." (Sing, "O Come Emmanuel")

**FOURTH WEEK** Leader: "Incline Your ear to our prayers, we beseech You, O Lord, and brighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Your visitation..Through Christ, our Lord." All: "Amen." (Sing, "O Come Emmanuel")