

Advent

This Sunday is the start of Advent, the time of year when we get ready for the great and special **Feast of Christmas**. Advent is a very exciting time with lots to look forward to...putting up the Christmas tree & other decorations, buying & wrapping presents, cooking and baking special food, making a list of what we would like Santa to bring.....And all of this because of the birth a very long time ago of one special baby, Jesus!



We use special symbols in the church during Advent to help us get ready for Jesus' birth. One of these symbols is the Advent wreath. As you can see from the picture the Advent wreath is a circle. This is to remind us of God who has no beginning or ending, but is everlasting. The wreath is covered in evergreen leaves because those leaves don't change colour; they are always the same, just like God's love for us. He never loves us more or less. He always loves us enormously & he won't ever stop loving us either.

As you can see too, there are 4 candles on the Advent wreath, 1 for each of the 4 Sundays of Advent. Each Sunday we light an extra one. When we come to the 4th candle, we know Christmas is getting very near! Some Advent wreaths have 5 candles because they include a white one for Christmas Day. The colour we use in the church for Advent is **purple**. That shows us it's a '**getting ready**' time.

You might notice that there is one **pink candle**. This candle is for the 3rd Sunday of Advent because that Sunday has a special name. It is called Gaudete or **JOY SUNDAY** because the first prayer of the Mass that day starts with the word rejoice!



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Of course, during the very first Advent, it was Mary and Joseph who were getting ready for Christmas and the birth of Jesus. We know the story of how they had to leave their home in Nazareth just when Mary was about to have the baby. They had to travel all the way to Bethlehem, more than a week's journey away, to take part in the census. It must have been very hard for them to travel such a long way on a donkey and then when they got to Bethlehem to find that there was nowhere for them to stay.



On **Christmas Day** we celebrate the birthday of Jesus and yet it is we and not Jesus who get the presents! How about giving him a present this year on his birthday? What kind of present do you think he would like? What he really likes us to do is to be kind and loving to other people. So how about you do some good deeds during Advent, so that on Christmas Day you can give him a collection of all those good deeds? THAT would make him very happy. Here is a link to an Advent Calendar with ideas for every day during Advent! <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/advent/calendars/childrens-advent-calendar/>

If you would like to make your own Advent wreath, you can find some ideas here <https://www.catholicicing.com/advent-ideas/> of how to do it!