



The Advent Wreath

How to make an Advent Wreath: If you do not have an advent wreath, you can make one with some candle holders and greens from the yard or store. Make something circular and color it green or wrap it in real or artificial evergreen garland, plus 4 candles that you can place in the wreath. Usually three purple candles and one rose-colored are used. If you do not have colored candles, use white ones, and tie purple and pink ribbons around them. Be careful that you don't have anything flammable near the flames and don't leave it unattended while the candles are lit.

Because the purpose of the wreath is to be a daily reminder to prepare ourselves to receive Christ on Christmas Morning, it is more important to say the blessing of the wreath and to say the prayers and light the candles every night than to have a picture-perfect wreath. Your children will remember the practice of lighting the candles each night for the rest of their lives.

Blessing of the Advent Wreath

Here's a little background on blessings as expressed in the introduction to the *Book of Blessings* approved by the bishops for use in the United States (the below is excerpted from pages 19-27).

The source of every good gift is God. He made all things good, and even after the Fall, He continued to offer His blessings as a sign of His love. God favored many persons—particularly the patriarchs, kings, priests, and parents—by allowing them to offer blessings so that other persons or the works of His creation would be showered with divine blessings.

Blessings are a part of the liturgy of the Church; those who are present are led to join themselves with heart and voice to the voice of the Church. The person presiding in the blessing represents the Church, so that from our shared prayer and petition, a blessing results that does not have a merely human source (though a human person pronounces it).

The typical blessing consists of two parts:

- (a) First, the proclamation of the word of God—to ensure that the blessing is a genuine sacred sign; and
- (b) Second, the praise of God's goodness and the petition for divine help through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

The blessing of the Advent Wreath below is the "shorter rite" from the *Book of Blessings* approved by the bishops for use in the United States.

Notes on blessing the wreath :

1. A blessing should be led by a priest or deacon, if one is in attendance, or else by a parent as the person God ordained to be the leader of the family. In our family, Dad leads the blessing.
2. The blessing can take place on the First Sunday of Advent or the evening before.



SHORTER RITE OF BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

[All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:]

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord

All respond: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
A light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy
And great rejoicing,
As they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
As men make merry when dividing spoils.
For a child is born to us, a son is given us;
Upon his shoulder dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.
His dominion is vast
And forever peaceful,
From David's throne, and over his kingdom,
Which he confirms and sustains
By judgment and justice,
Both now and forever. (Isaiah 9:1-2, 5-6)

Leader: [A priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a layperson says the prayer with hands joined]:

Lord God,
Your Church joyfully awaits the coming of its Savior,
Who enlightens our hearts
And dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin.

Pour forth your blessings upon us
As we light the candles of this wreath;
May their light reflect the splendor of Christ,
Who is Lord, for ever and ever.

All respond: Amen.



Every evening we light the wreath before our evening meal, saying the prayers below (found at www.catholicculture.org). We let the wreath burn throughout the meal.

FIRST WEEK: Say the following prayer every night of the first week of Advent. Then light the first purple candle and allow it to burn during the evening meals every night during the first week. We help one of our children light the candle. Every night of the first week light only one purple candle.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord

All respond: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: O Lord, stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, and come, that by Thy protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins and saved by Thy deliverance. Through Christ our Lord.

All respond: Amen.

SECOND WEEK: Say the following prayer every night of the second week of Advent.

Light and allow two purple candles to burn during the second week.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord

All respond: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: O Lord, stir up our hearts that we may prepare for Thy only begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with pure minds. Through Christ our Lord.

All respond: Amen.

THIRD WEEK: Following Gaudete Sunday, or the joyful Sunday, in Advent, say the following prayer every night during the third week of Advent. Gaudete Sunday is represented by rose (or pink) instead of the penitential purple color. So, during the third week, light two purple candles and the one pink candle.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord

All respond: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: O Lord, we beg Thee, incline Thy ear to our prayers and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation. Through Christ our Lord.

All respond: Amen.

FOURTH WEEK: Say the following prayer every night of the fourth week of Advent. All

four candles are allowed to burn during the evening meals of the fourth week.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord

All respond: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: O Lord, stir up Thy power, we pray Thee, and come; and with great might help us, that with the help of Thy Grace, Thy merciful forgiveness may hasten what our sins impede. Through Christ our Lord.

All respond: Amen.

After the four weeks is over it is time to rejoice. The time of penance is over. We change our ribbon on our Advent wreath to red and use white candles and use it as a center piece on our kitchen table.