

The Advent Wreath



A booklet to help families pray
during Advent

Family Name

Children's Names



COLLECT FOR CHRISTMAS (BCP)

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

NATIVITY PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

The feast day of your birth resembles You, Lord
Because it brings joy to all humanity.
Old people and infants alike enjoy your day.
Your day is celebrated
from generation to generation.
Kings and emperors may pass away,
And the festivals to commemorate them soon lapse.
But your festival
will be remembered until the end of time.
Your day is a means and a pledge of peace.
At Your birth heaven and earth were reconciled,
Since you came from heaven to earth on that day
You forgave our sins and wiped away our guilt.
You gave us so many gifts on the day of your birth:
A treasure chest of spiritual medicines for the sick;
Spiritual light for the blind;
The cup of salvation for the thirsty;
The bread of life for the hungry.
In the winter when trees are bare,
You give us the most succulent spiritual fruit.
In the frost when the earth is barren,
You bring new hope to our souls.
In December when seeds are hidden in the soil,
The staff of life springs forth from the virgin womb.

St. Ephraim the Syrian (AD 306-373)

In the Advent wreath ritual, one candle is lit each week progressively through Advent. Before the candles are lit, someone in the family reads the assigned reading for the week. Advent 1,2, and 4 are purple candles which is the color of the season. Purple is both the church's color to announce a penitential season, and it is also the color of kings which is appropriate as we wait for the birth of the King of Kings on Christmas Day. We light a rose candle on Advent 3 to symbolize Mary's important role in salvation history. Mary chose to cooperate with God by saying "thy will be done" and bearing Jesus in her womb, and so we honor her in this way. The white candle in the middle is lit on Christmas Day, representing the light of Christ. After lighting the candle for the week, another person will lead the prayer for that candle.



ADVENT 1

Heavenly Father, as we begin this Advent, give light to our eyes and peace to our hearts. May the Lord find us watching and waiting in joy when He comes. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.



ISAIAH 11:1-4A,10

¹There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

²And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge
by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

¹⁰In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the
peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall
be glorious.



3: CRÈCHE

The crèche, crib, manger, nativity scene, whatever you call it, is a great way of remembering the season. The practice of setting up a crèche from Advent through Epiphany was started by St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis, who was passionate about preaching the Gospel, wanted the Gospel to come to life for the people, so he quite literally brought it to life. Francis was a friend of the animals, so he gathered some of his cows, sheep, birds, and donkey friends, and with the help of some villagers, recreated the nativity scene from the Gospel. The image made the story real for the villagers, and soon the practice was widespread. Having a crèche in your home will help your family remember that Christ is coming on Christmas Day.

The symbol is even more effective if the Christ child does not appear in the manger until Christmas Day. If your crèche has the wandering Magi, the wise men could also be set up in different places around the house to show their journey following the star of Bethlehem. On Epiphany (January 6th), the Magi could arrive at the manger. The Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts are the reason why many cultures exchange gifts on Epiphany (also known as Three King's Day) rather than Christmas.



2: ADVENT CALENDARS

Advent calendars help count the days until Christmas. This is a more recent tradition (nineteenth century) that actually grew out of the Advent wreath tradition. The first Advent Calendars were simply cardboard slabs with candles glued to the slab for each day of Advent. The candles were lit in a similar manner to the Advent wreath. Eventually the candles were replaced by small doors that opened revealing a verse of scripture and sometimes a prize (a small piece of candy or trinket was typically used). Advent calendars became very popular in Weimar Germany, but during World War II they were outlawed to save cardboard.

The calendars reemerged in England in the 1950's and have been popular ever since. Contemporary Advent Calendars depict a variety of scenes, very often of Christmas Villages. Making an Advent Calendar is a great arts and crafts project for children. Appropriate scripture verses to write behind the doors can be found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Mt 1, Lk 1). Slowly revealing the story of the days leading to Jesus' birth can be very dramatic. Behind the doors could also be a candy I.O.U. to be redeemed at Christmas.



ADVENT 2

Father in heaven, set our hearts ablaze to follow in the steps of John the Baptist. May we bring light and love to all we meet, that the darkness of sin and fear may be overcome. In Christ's name we ask this.

Amen.



MICAH 5:2-5A

²But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the
LORD,

in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.

⁵And he shall be their peace.



Advent DEVOTIONALS

1: THE ADVENT WREATH

The wreaths that we hang on our doors come from the medieval tradition of the Advent Wreath. They are laid flat on a table and four candles are placed in the greens. Three of the candles are purple and one is rose. The candles are lit progressively, adding another each week until all are lit in the days before Christmas. The purple candles match the liturgical color of the season, and the rose-colored candle symbolizes joy and represents Mary's necessary role in the birth of Jesus.

A more modern practice adds a fifth candle in the middle, symbolizing the light of Christ, and it is lit through Christmas. Traditionally, the first purple candle was lit during Sunday dinner on Advent I. A parent usually leads a prayer of thanksgiving, and then the youngest family member lights the candle (of course, taking turns might be a better tradition). This is a great way to honor the season, build anticipation for Christmas, and to add more prayer time in the home.



LUKE 2:1-20

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.



ADVENT 3 (ROSE CANDLE)

As we draw near to you, Lord God,
keep us aware of your presence in all we
do. Come with power to enlighten us by
your grace, that we may live in praise
and peace all our days. We ask this
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



LUKE 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.



CHRISTMAS DAY

Father in heaven, you so loved us that
You sent Your Son, among us as Savior
and Lord. Fill us with Your blessing,
that we may grow in love and continue
to live our Christian faith. We ask this
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Your Advent **Prayers**
Advent

A decorative graphic featuring a golden scroll that curves across the middle of the text. The scroll is flanked by green holly leaves and clusters of red berries. The text "Your" and "Prayers" are in a bold, red, serif font, while "Advent" is in a smaller, italicized, black serif font.



ADVENT 4

Lord Jesus, we approach that holy moment when Your coming as man is renewed in our hearts. Give us peace and allow us to celebrate Your presence with joy, that we may some day share Your glory. We ask this of You, who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, as One God, now and forever.

Amen.



ISAIAH 9:6-7

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Your Advent *Prayers*
Prayers

A decorative graphic featuring a golden scroll with holly leaves and red berries. The scroll is unrolled and has a textured, ribbon-like appearance. It is surrounded by green holly leaves and clusters of three red berries. The text "Your Advent Prayers" is positioned above the scroll, with "Your" and "Prayers" in a bold red serif font, and "Advent" in a smaller, italicized black serif font.