



From the Liturgy Office...

Advent: A time to prepare for the Lord

*Next weekend, on Sunday 29 November, we begin a new liturgical year as we commence the season of Advent. The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming". Advent is a season of the liturgical year observed in many Christian churches as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas and the return of Jesus at the Second Coming.*

This year, the parish will be marking the passage of time during Advent by using the traditional Advent Wreath. The wreath and candles are full of symbolism tied to the Christmas season. The wreath itself, which is made of various evergreens, signifies continuous life. 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 we find in Christ.

The candles also have their own special significance. The four coloured candles represent the four weeks of Advent and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple because the colour violet is a liturgical colour that signifies a time of prayer, penance, and sacrifice. On the third Sunday of Advent also called, Gaudete Sunday, the pink candle is lit. Pink is the liturgical colour of joy and is meant to remind us of the joy that the world experienced at the birth of Jesus, as well as the joy that the faithful have reached the midpoint of Advent.

The white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath and lit on Christmas Eve. This candle is called the "Christ Candle" and represents the life of Christ. The colour white is for purity—because Christ is our sinless, pure Saviour.

This year, we invite all families in the parish to join with us and set up your own family Advent wreath. The blessing of an Advent Wreath takes place on the First Sunday of Advent or on the evening before the First Sunday of Advent. When the blessing of the Advent Wreath is celebrated in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another member of the family.

Along with the Blessing of the Advent Wreath prayer, this leaflet also contains prayers to use each week when you light the Advents candles, prayers for the blessing of your Christmas Tree and Nativity Creche as well as Prayers for Before and After Meals during Advent.

May the peace and joy of Christ be in your hearts and homes.

God bless,

Rita Cordina

Liturgy and Music Coordinator

Blessing of an Advent Wreath

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

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

Response (R/.) Who made heaven and earth.

Then someone reads the scripture passage from Isaiah 9:2, 5-7

Reader: A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shone.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;

authority rests upon his shoulders;

and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually,

and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness

from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

R/. Thanks be to God.

With hands joined, the leader says:

Lord our God,

we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:

he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,

he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,

he is the Saviour of every nation.

Lord God,

let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath.

May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.

May he come quickly and not delay.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. **R/. Amen.**

The blessing may conclude with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

O come, desire of nations, bind

in one the hearts of humankind;

bid ev'ry sad division cease

and be thyself our Prince of peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

shall come to thee, O Israel. —*From Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*



Blessing of a Christmas Tree

The use of the Christmas tree finds its origins in the medieval mystery plays that depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle that symbolized Christ, the Light of the world. According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the Solemnity of Epiphany. The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing.

In the home the Christmas tree may be blessed by a parent or another family member, in connection with the evening meal on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time on Christmas Day.

When all have gathered, a suitable song may be sung.

The leader makes the sign of the cross, and all reply, "Amen."

The leader may greet those present in the following words:

Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever. **R/. Amen.**

In the following or similar words, the leader prepares those present for the blessing:

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

One of those present reads a text of sacred Scripture from Titus 3:4-7

Reader: A reading from the book of Titus

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

R/. Thanks be to God.

The intercessions are then said. The leader says:

Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord. **R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.**

That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord.

R/. Lord, give light to our hearts.

After the intercessions the leader invites all present to say the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father....

The leader says the prayer with hands joined:

Lord our God,

we praise you for the light of creation:

the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.

We praise you for the light of Israel:

the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures.

We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:

he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,

who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Lord God,

let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree.

May the light and cheer it gives

be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.

May all who delight in this tree

come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R/. Amen.

The lights of the tree are then illuminated.

The leader concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying: May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and forever. R/. Amen.

The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer

our spirits by thine advent here;

disperse the gloomy clouds of night

and death's dark shadow put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel

shall come to thee, O Israel.—*From Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*



Blessing of a Christmas Manger (Creche) or Nativity

In its present form, the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi, who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time. At home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.

All family members gather around the Christmas Creche or nativity scene.

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

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R/. Who made heaven and earth.

One of those present reads a text of sacred Scripture from Luke 2:1-8

Reader: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

R/. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The leader prays with hands joined:

God of every nation and people,
from the very beginning of creation
you have made manifest your love:
when our need for a Saviour was great
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.

To our lives he brings joy and peace,
justice, mercy, and love.

Lord,
bless all who look upon this manger;
may it remind us of the humble birth of
Jesus,
and raise our thoughts to him,
who is God-with-us and Saviour of all,
and who lives and reigns forever and ever.



R/. Amen. —*From Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*

Prayer Before Meals during Advent

Leader: Father, we thank you for all you have given us.

The gift of life, of family and friends and food that strengthens and nourishes us.
You loved us so much that you sent your Son Jesus to become part of our lives,
to forgive us and save us and show us Your care for us.

Be with us this Advent season and help us prepare the way for His coming.

Together:

**Bless us O Lord, and these Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy
bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayer Before Meals during Advent

Leader: Help us live kind, just and holy lives as we get ready for the coming of
Jesus.

Together:

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

**We give you thanks Almighty God for these gifts and all Thy benefits which we
have received from Thy bounty through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Litany for the Lighting of the Christ Candle

On Christmas Eve, light the white candle symbolising the purity of the Christ Child.

The leader begins the litany by saying:

Sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things;
God's right hand and holy arm have worked salvation.

All: Today in the city of David a Saviour has been born to you.

The Lord has made salvation known and revealed righteousness to the nations.

All: Today in the city of David a Saviour has been born to you.

God has remembered his love and faithfulness to the people; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God.

All: Today in the city of David a Saviour has been born to you.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing.

All: Today in the city of David a Saviour has been born to you.

Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord, for God comes to judge the earth. The Lord will judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity.

All: Today in the city of David a Saviour has been born to you.

We have now light the four outside candles of the Advent Wreath. The first candle reminds us of hope. The second candle is the candle of peace. The third candle represents our joy. The fourth candle is for love, our love of God, and God's love for us. We now light the centre candle, the Christ candle. Jesus Christ is our HOPE. Jesus Christ gives us PEACE. We can have JOY because Jesus has come to us. Jesus is God's greatest gift of LOVE. And because of God's loving gift of Jesus Christ, we have life now and forever.

All: Today in the city of David a Saviour has been born to you.

We Pray Together:

Loving God, we are thankful that the waiting of Advent is over. We rejoice that today in the city of David a Saviour is born. We rejoice that our hope is fulfilled, and God's peace has come to earth. We rejoice that we can fully know God's love in Jesus Christ. Help us to celebrate today and always that a Saviour has been born to us. Amen.

Taken from: Readings for Advent and Christmas by Charles Wiessner

Prayer Before Christmas Meal

Dear Heavenly Father,

We bow our heads as we honour your presence at this table.

Love brought Jesus to the earth, and love brings us to this Christmas table.
Let us always remember that Jesus is the reason for the season.

Today, as we share this holiday feast celebrating the arrival of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in a little stable in Bethlehem, may we also share with one another a joyful heart and a warm smile.

Let us be thankful for each family member who has come to share this meal and for the delicious food that has been provided.

Lord, help us find and enjoy *all* of the blessings that you have placed in this Christmas day.*

May our **Christmas dinner** be filled with kindness and may the memories of today warm our hearts for years to come.

Amen.

(If your meal is not on Christmas day - you may want to end with the word "season" instead of the word "day.")*

