

RCIA: INQUIRY SESSION EIGHT

TRADITIONS FOR ADVENT & ADVENT RITUAL

Week: 21/11/22 - 27/11/22

THE ADVENT WREATH



The use of the wreath and candles during Advent are a longstanding Catholic tradition that was originally adopted by Christians in the Middle Ages as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas.

The wreath and candles are rich in symbolism. 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 use of laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering. The pine, and yew signify immortality and the cedar signifies strength and healing. The prickly leaves of the holly reminds us of the crown of thorns worn by Jesus. The red berries signify Christ's blood, the cost of our redemption. The pine cones that decorate the wreath symbolize life and resurrection.

Four candles are inserted around the wreath representing the four weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple signifying a time of prayer, penance, and sacrifice, and one pink.

The **first candle** symbolizes **hope** and is called the "Prophet's Candle." The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival.

The **second candle** represents **faith** and is called "Bethlehem's Candle." Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also the birthplace of King David.

The **third candle** symbolizes **joy** and is called the "Shepherd's Candle." To the shepherd's great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too. In liturgy, the colour rose signifies joy.

The **fourth candle** represents **peace** and is called the "Angel's Candle." The angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace--He came to bring people close to God and to each other again.

THE JESSE TREE

The Jesse Tree custom typically involves placing ornaments, throughout the days of Advent, on a tree or the figure of a tree, each of which points to a biblical ancestor of Our Lord Jesus. It is based on the age-old artistic depiction called "The Tree of Jesse," which itself derives its name from Jesse, the Father of the great Jewish King David. One prophecy in the Bible, in the book of Isaiah, says: 'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.' (11:1)

From ancient times, Christians have interpreted this statement (and the longer biblical passage that it introduces) as a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah and King, because the Gospel genealogies of Jesus (Matthew 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38) show that Our Lord was in the royal line of David. So He was a descendant of Jesse as well (Luke 3:32). The Tree of Jesse is thus a pictorial genealogy of Christ.

Bible Story:	Where it is in the Bible:	Symbol:
Creation	Genesis 1	The earth
Adam and Eve	Genesis 2:4 - 3:24	A tree with fruit or an apple
Noah & the Flood	Genesis 6:9 - 9:17	A rainbow
God's promise to Abraham	Genesis 12:1-7 & 15:1-6	A tent
Isaac	Genesis 22:1-18	A ram
Jacob's Ladder	Genesis 28:10-19	A ladder
Joseph's Coat	Genesis 37 & 50	A multicoloured coat
Moses	Exodus 2:1 - 4:20	A burning bush
Israelites and the Passover	Exodus 12:1-42	A lamb
The 10 Commandments	Exodus 19:1 - 20:20	Two stone tablets
Joshua and the fall of Jericho	Joshua 6:1-20	A ram's horn trumpet
Ruth	(Whole Book)	A sheaf of corn
King David	1 Samuel 16:1-3	A six pointed 'Star of David'
Solomon's Temple	1 Kings 6	The temple
Elijah and Baal's Priests	1 Kings 18:16-39	A bonfire
Isaiah's 'Jesse' Prophecy	Isaiah 11:1-11	A tree stump with a single branch growing from it
Jonah and the Whale	Jonah (Whole Book)	A whale

John the Baptist	Matthew 3:13-17	A scallop shell
Mary	Luke 1:26-38	A white lily
Elizabeth	Luke 1:39-56	A mother and child
Zechariah	Luke 1:57-80	A pencil and tablet
Joseph	Matthew 1:19-25	A carpenter's hammer
The Shepherds	Luke 2:8-20	A fluffy sheep!
The Wisemen	Matthew 2:1-12	Three gifts or three crowns
Jesus	Luke 2:1-8	A baby in a manger

1. Gospel Reflection: Sunday 20/11/22 is the First Sunday of Advent (Year A) and the Gospel reading is Mt. 24:37-44. The text of the reading is below. The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion. The following questions may be helpful: What does this mean to me? How does it make me feel? Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing? What images of God emerge for me? What do I think that God is saying in this text? What impact does this have on my life?

GOSPEL READING

Reader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And with your spirit.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Response: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man.

Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.

Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into.

So you too, must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

Response: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

RCIA Advent Ritual for New Inquirers

After the homily, the priest invites the RCIA Candidates and Catechists to stand. He addresses them as follows:

Priest:

My dear friends,
you have been called to the light of faith,
and the way of the Gospel now lies open to you.
Set your feet firmly on that path and acknowledge the living God,
who will speak to you in the depth of your heart.
Walk in the light of Christ over these months of preparation.
Learn to trust in his wisdom.
Commit your lives daily to his care,
so that you may come to believe in him with all your heart.
This is the way of faith along which Christ will lead you in love toward eternal
life.

Are you ready, with the help of God, to live this life?

Candidate: I am.

Priest:

May God, who has called you to faith, bring his work to fulfilment in your lives.

The Priest addresses the Catechists:

My dear friends,
you have been chosen from among us
to share the light and truth of our faith
with those whom God has called to the light.

We thank you for these your servants
who have committed themselves to religious instruction.
Guide them by your wisdom, instruct them by your teaching
that in everything they do, they may be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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

The Priest then turns to the Christian Community gathered.

My dear friends,

You have already received the Holy Spirit through the grace of Baptism and Confirmation. You have been empowered to proclaim the Good News, and to guide others along the path of faith.

Are you willing to support and strengthen these candidates preparing to be received into the Church through prayer and witness in the Christian life?

Congregation: We are.

Priest:

Heavenly Father,

fulfil your promise:

sanctify these candidates in preparation for your gifts,

that they may come to be reborn as your children

and enter the community of your Church.

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

The Priest returns to the chair, inviting the Congregation to stand and recite the Profession of Faith.