

PRAYING WITH THE ADVENT WREATH WEEK FOUR



A FUTURE
FULL OF HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE

Praying with the Advent Wreath

One of the most iconic symbols of Advent is that of the Advent Wreath. It is a beautiful symbol of the eternity of Christ and his presence in our lives. As a symbol, however, apart from being lit on each of the Sundays of Advent, the deeper meaning held within each of those candles is often lost or unacknowledged. This is a pity because there is a richness in the wreath which offers a real opportunity for reflecting in a prayerful way this beautiful season of preparation for Christmas. Before we look at how we might use our Advent Wreath for a time of reflection let us remind ourselves of its origins.

The Advent Wreath was first used as Christian devotion in the Middle Ages. Its design comes from the customs of the pre-Christian Germanic and Scandinavian cultures, where candles and greenery were used as symbols of light and life during the dark and cold winter. The Advent Wreath has always been a circular evergreen wreath with four or five candles, three purple, one rose and sometimes a white candle for Christmas Day placed in the centre of the wreath.

The candles symbolise the light of Christ coming into the world. The evergreen symbolises renewal and the circular shape the completeness of God. The candle colours come from the traditional liturgical colours of Advent, (purple and rose) and Christmas (white). Each candle is lit on the appropriate Sunday of Advent and then the candles can be lit each day according to the week. Overtime each candle was given a name and linked to a particular part of the Advent story.

- Candle 1. Hope (purple)
- Candle 2. Peace (purple)
- Candle 3. Joy (rose)
- Candle 4. Love (purple)

Praying with a focus on each candle can really help us to reflect as we journey through Advent. Just taking fifteen or twenty minutes each day to pray can enrich our appreciation of the season which so often can be overtaken by the need to shop endlessly, bake, send out invites etc. Simply giving a short period of time allows us to breathe and refocus on why we are doing all this preparation in the first place.

What follows is a format that this prayer time might take and some reflection questions for each of the weeks; it can be done as a family, a parish community or as an individual.





of Love

Week Four

- Gather around the Advent Wreath and light all four candles
- Have a moment of silence and then start with a prayer:

Prayer

O Wisdom, Holy Word of God

You govern all things with your strong, yet tender care

Come and show your people the way to salvation.

Romans 8:18-25

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved.

Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.





Scent of Love

by Amanda Grevette

The artist chooses to depict a father and his child. The devotion of the father and love for his child is captured in the way the baby is being held so close to his heart.

Discuss/Reflect

What strikes you about the picture?

What feelings does it evoke in you?

In what ways might it speak to us of the love which God has for us?

Personal Reflection - Christmas is almost upon us and in our reading we hear of the whole world 'groaning' as if in labour in the same way that we groan inwardly for peace, for joy, for freedom from those things which oppress us. The God of Love is about to enter our world, promising to free us from all that weighs us down. The God of Love the incarnate Lord will come once more. Will we be ready?

For what do you long for in your life at this time of year?

What do you hope that the God of Love will bring to your life?

Where in the world is there the most need for the God of love to enter?

At the end of the time of reflection if you have time you may wish to share your thoughts if you are praying together as a family.

At the end of the time of reflection if you have time you may wish to share your thoughts if you are praying together as a family or a parish community.

Concluding Prayer

God of Love, you promised freedom to the Israelites and you kept your promise.

You promised hope in the coming of your Son and he was good news for the world.

You promise joy to each one of us and we pray for your continued faithfulness.

Lord, we pray for strength to remain true to all you offer us.

Fill us with confidence in your presence in our lives.

Fill us with joy, peace and love as we go through this busy time of year.

Amen.

