

PRAYING WITH THE ADVENT WREATH WEEK TWO



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 Peace

Week Two

- Gather around the Advent Wreath and light two of the purple candles
- Have a moment of silence and then start with a prayer

Prayer

Lord our God, help us to prepare the way for the coming of your Son.
Let us clear the path of obstacles so that we may serve the Lord
With open minds and generous hearts.
We ask this through Christ, your Son. Amen.

Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.



An amalgamation of painful images by Mohammed Asad illustrates the suffering of the Palestinian people from the various wars and intifadas. It includes the death of the young child Mohammed al-Dura, a scene from the 2008 war, a scene from the war in 2012, and a scene from the 2014 Israeli assault on Gaza.



Discuss/Reflect

What strikes you about the picture? Where, if at all, is there hope in the picture? What feelings does it evoke in you?

Personal Reflection - 'Chris Rea's popular song, 'Driving home for Christmas' carries a common theme for Christmas – it is about going home to be with family, eating food and unwrapping presents none of which is wrong. Central to Scripture however, is a different kind of going home. Reflecting on our reading today we can see that going home is seeing things in a different way – it is seeing a way of life where there is no more war, where we allow God to teach us a different way of living, where peace reigns. When Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned a world without racism, he was doing more than dreaming. He was offering a vision, another way of seeing the world. If we can see the vision of a world of peace we can live it and need not wait for some long-expected future to do so.

Where do you find peace in your life? How can we bring peace to others? What obstacles do you wish to overcome to be ready for Christmas?

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 parish community.

Concluding Prayer

Lord God, you promised hope to the Israelites and you kept your promise. You promised peace in the coming of your Son and he was peace for the world. You promise peace 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 and peace as we go through this busy time of year. Amen.

