

Diocese of Prince George  
*Liturgical Notes*  
Diocesan Liturgy Commission

**ADVENT WREATH**

*(placement in the church, blessing of the wreath, and lighting of candles)*

“A wreath is often used in homes and schools during the Advent season as the focus of prayer.

“The wreath is made of evergreen branches or boughs placed in a circle and four candles. The colour of the candles is not the main issue. In some European countries the custom is four red candles. In North America, one tradition is to use three violet candles and one rose (for the third Sunday of Advent), corresponding to the colour prescribed for the liturgical vestments worn by the priest or bishop at Mass. Four violet or white candles may also be used.

“Each Sunday (Saturday evening), the beginning of a new week, the candles are lighted reflecting the Sunday or week of Advent. The candles mark the steps in our Advent journey.<sup>1</sup>

The advent wreath is one of Christian symbols used to call to mind the coming of the Messiah and it is one thing that most Christian denominations can share and appreciate in Advent. However, it is valuable to note that advent wreath is non-liturgical symbol, and its importance should not be exaggerated. Thus, this liturgical note regarding advent wreath, its placement in the church, appropriate time for blessing of the wreath, and lighting of candles.

**PLACEMENT IN THE CHURCH:** The wreath must be placed in a visible place in the church — on a small table, or the trunk of a tree or a customized stand. It should not, however, be situated that it will block either the altar or the ambo. “The altar should occupy a place where it is truly the centre toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns.”<sup>2</sup>

**BLESSING OF THE 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.<sup>3</sup> There are a few options for the blessing: (1) Within the Mass; (2) Within a Celebration of the Word or Liturgy of the Hours, either in the church or at home (3) A shorter rite of blessing outside the Mass.

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<sup>1</sup> Blessings and Prayer for Home and Family, CCCB. p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> General Instruction of the Roman Missal, §299.

<sup>3</sup> cf. A book of blessings, CCCB. p. 204.

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If the blessing is to take place within the celebration of the Mass, it is to happen according to the outline laid out in the Book of Blessings<sup>4</sup>:

*At the conclusion of the Universal Prayer, the main celebrant with hands outstretched, says the prayer of blessing:*

Father,  
we praise you for sending your Son  
to save us from our sins  
and to be light in our darkness.  
Bless + us as we gather in his name,  
and bless + this wreath as a sign of his light among us.

We ask this blessing through Christ our Lord<sup>5</sup>.

*R.* Amen.

*The first candle is then lighted.*

**OR**

Lord God,  
your Church joyfully awaits the coming of its Savior,  
who enlightens our hearts and dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin.

Pour forth your blessings upon us  
as we light the candles of this wreath;  
may their light reflect the splendor of Christ,  
who is Lord, for ever and ever<sup>6</sup>.

*R.* Amen.

*The first candle is then lighted.*

**OR**

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<sup>4</sup> Book of Blessings, USCCB. §1517-20.

<sup>5</sup> A book of blessings, CCCB. p. 204.

<sup>6</sup> Book of Blessings, USCCB. §1519.

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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 Savior 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<sup>7</sup>.

*R. Amen.*

*The first candle is then lighted.*

If the blessing is to take place within a celebration of the Word of God, the prayers found in the book 'Blessings and Prayers for Home and Family' may be used (see pp. 209-215).

If the blessing is to take place before Mass, the prayer found in the book 'A book of blessings' may be used (see p. 204). The prayers given above may also be used.

**LIGHTING OF CANDLES:** The candles in the Advent wreath represent the four weeks of the time of Advent and are progressively lit on each of the Sundays. An individual parishioner, a couple, or a family may be chosen ahead of time to be the prayer leader and to light the candle that corresponds to the Sunday of Advent.

**First Sunday of Advent:** *The first candle is lit after the Advent wreath is blessed. It is done in silence.*

**Second to Fourth Sunday of Advent:** *The appropriate number of candles are lit before the Mass (i.e., on the Third Sunday of Advent, two candles are already lit, the third candle will only be*

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<sup>7</sup> Book of Blessings, USCCB. §1520.

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*lit after the prayer is said). The candle corresponding to the Sunday of Advent will be lit after a brief prayer is said by the assigned individual parishioner, couple, or family. The prayer and lighting of candle take place just before the Mass begins (meaning before the processional hymn).*

**On the other Sundays, a prayer may be said in these or similar words:**

Heavenly Father,  
look upon us with love,  
and fill us with the Spirit of Jesus.  
Help us to love you,  
and protect us during this week  
as we await the coming of our Lord.

We ask this grace  
in the name of Jesus our Lord.<sup>8</sup>

*R.* Amen.

*The candle corresponding to the Sunday of Advent is then lighted.*

**OR**

God of light and hope,  
look upon us in love,  
and fill us with the Spirit of Jesus  
that we may love you and serve you in your kingdom.  
Protect us during this week  
and keep us watchful in prayer  
as we await the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ,  
who is the light of the world,  
and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
God, forever and ever<sup>9</sup>.

*R.* Amen.

*The candle corresponding to the Sunday of Advent is then lighted.*

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<sup>8</sup> A book of blessings, CCCB. p. 204.

<sup>9</sup> Blessings and Prayers for Home and Family, CCCB. p.214.

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OR

Almighty God,  
strengthen the resolve of your faithful people  
to prepare for the coming of your Christ  
by works of justice and mercy,  
so that when we go forth to meet him  
he may call us to sit at his right hand  
and possess the kingdom of heaven.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever<sup>10</sup>.

R. Amen.

*The candle corresponding to the Sunday of Advent is then lighted.*

*After the candle is lighted the prayer leader concludes by saying:*

May Jesus Christ, coming in glory,  
Overcome the darkness of sin and sorrow.

R. Amen.

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<sup>10</sup> Blessings and Prayers for Home and Family, CCCB. p.215.