



Congregation of St. Pius V

IMMACULATA

Immaculate Heart Seminary
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Lighting an Advent Wreath Candle

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Advent is the liturgical season that immediately precedes Christmas. One of the purposes of this time is to remind us to prepare ourselves spiritually to celebrate the anniversary of Our Lord’s birth. Unfortunately, many people often become overwhelmed by their material preparations for Christmas and, consequently, forget their spiritual preparations. So, like a good mother, the Church gives us some reminders by way of the Sunday Gospels and also by way of her traditions and customs during this holy season. Among the most popular of these customs is the Advent wreath.

The Advent wreath is among the long-standing customs in the Catholic Church, and it is one that is full of meaning. Although its actual origins are uncertain, the Advent wreath is believed to have originated in Germany in the late 1500s. The wreath is made of evergreen branches woven in a circle. The shape of the wreath symbolizes the eternity of God. As a circle has no beginning and no end, neither does God. He

always was and always will be. The evergreen branches represent everlasting life and the hope we have of attaining it on account of Our Lord’s Incarnation, Birth, Passion, and Death.

Arranged in the wreath are four candles: three violet and one rose-colored. Violet is a liturgical color that symbolizes prayer, penance, and sacrifice. During the first, second, and fourth weeks of Advent, we light the violet candles to remind us of what we should be doing to prepare ourselves spiritually for Christmas, namely, fidelity to our daily prayers and the making of sacrifices. On Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent, we light the rose-colored candle. The joyful rose color represents our jubilation at the nearness of Christmas. By Christmas Eve all four candles of the Advent wreath are lit. The flame of the candle represents Christ, the Light of the World, Who by His birth brought light into a world of darkness and sin. The progressive lighting of candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding Our Lord’s first coming into the world. In fact, each candle represents 1,000 years of waiting for the Messiah. Thus, added together, the four Advent candles stand for the 4,000 years mankind waited for the coming of the Redeemer.