

## What is an Advent Wreath?

- Many churches and families prominently display an evergreen wreath with four candles throughout the Advent Season.
- It is traditionally made of some type or mixture of evergreens (fir, spruce, juniper, holly, etc.), symbolizing the continuation of life in the middle of the cold and dark winter (in the northerly latitudes, at least).



- Advent wreaths traditionally include three purple/violet candles and one pink/rose-colored candle, which are arranged evenly around the wreath, although some people use four violet or four white candles.
- Only one purple candle is lit during the first week, two in the second week, three (incl. the pink one) in the third week, and all four during the fourth week of Advent; the gradually increasing light symbolizes the approach of Christmas, the birth of Jesus, the light of the world.
- Since the rose candle is not lit until the Third Sunday of Advent, it is best to start on the First Sunday of Advent lighting the purple candle located directly opposite the pink one, and then to continue clockwise around the wreath in the following weeks. Thus, one could go in the following orders: 1-right, 2-front, 3-left (rose), 4-back; or 1-front right, 2-front left, 3-back left (rose), and 4-back right.
- In many churches, a large wreath is ritually blessed at the beginning of the first liturgy on the First Sunday of Advent. Families can also use a smaller Advent wreath in their homes, which they themselves can bless.
- Families can gather around the wreath daily for some brief Advent prayers and readings, especially at the time of the evening meal, lighting the appropriate number of candles for each week.
- Some Christian traditions assign specific symbolism to each of the candles:
  - 1) The *Prophet's* Candle, symbolizing **Hope**;
  - 2) The *Bethlehem* Candle, symbolizing **Faith**;
  - 3) The *Shepherd's* Candle, symbolizing **Joy**;
  - 4) The *Angel's* Candle, symbolizing **Peace**.