



Liturgical Commission

Pastoral Suggestions for the Use of the Advent Wreath in the Churches of the Archdiocese of Kingston

1. The Advent Wreath is a popular religious custom whose use should be encouraged in homes, schools and churches as a means of highlighting the Church's joyful prayer as she waits for the return of her Lord and Saviour. The Advent

Wreath can assist families to maintain a prayerful atmosphere in the home; in the Church it helps to connect the religious practice of the Parish to the home and school. The use of the Advent Wreath in the Parish Church can support the efforts of parents at home, of educators in schools, and of all parishioners. It can also help to promote the unique character of the Advent Season in the midst of a secular culture with its exclusive focus of the commercial aspects of Christmas.

2. The Advent Wreath should be positioned in a place where it can be seen by the people as they enter the Church. This does not necessarily mean that it needs to be seen during the celebration of the Eucharist. The sanctuary of the church seems an obvious place, however, there are other possibilities. Originally the Wreath was hung from the ceiling. This may be possible in churches with low ceilings. In churches with large vestibules or gathering areas this may be an appropriate place. When placed in the sanctuary, the Advent Wreath should not be placed in front of the Altar, especially if it is placed on a table. The Wreath must not obscure or compete with the Altar, which always remains the primary symbol and central focus of the Celebration of the Eucharist. The side of the sanctuary is a better place for the Advent Wreath, if it cannot be placed at the entrance.

3. In the Roman Rite, blessings normally take place within the Eucharist after the Homily. However, the Roman Rite does not contain a provision or formula for the Blessing of an Advent Wreath within the Eucharistic Liturgy. The question arises when should the Advent Wreath be blessed. Blessing the Advent Wreath after the Homily seems to ignore its presence in the Church for too long a time. Blessing it within the Introductory Rites of the Mass distracts from the purpose of the Penitential Act and duplicates the Collect Prayer. Therefore, it is recommended that the Blessing of the Wreath take place before the Celebration of the Eucharist begins.

4. Before the Mass begins, and if possible, before the Entrance Procession, the priest and ministers gather at the Wreath, whether placed in or near the sanctuary, in the body or nave of the Church or in the atrium or vestibule. Members of the assembly, especially families with children, may be invited to gather at the Wreath, especially if it is not visible to them. Music may be played as the priest, the ministers and members of the assembly gather.

5. A member of the congregation or a family may be invited to light the appropriate candle at the proper time. On the Second, Third and Fourth Sundays of Advent, the candles from the previous Sunday should be lighted beforehand, and only the candle for the current Sunday is lighted.

6. After the lighting of the candle, the Entrance Hymn may be sung as all return to their seats, and the priest with the ministers continue to the sanctuary and venerate the Altar. After the Hymn, the Mass continues as usual with the Sign of the Cross, the Greeting and the Penitential Act.

7. A popular children's song (*Light the Advent candle one*) is often used in school settings for the Advent Wreath Blessing and Lighting of Candles. It should be pointed out that this song does not

reflect the Catholic understanding of Advent as a time of watching and waiting for the Return of Christ. Rather the song's words point almost exclusively to Christmas Day and its events. An alternate version of this hymn, that tries to capture the spirit of Advent, is provided for optional use below.

8. **A sheet for the participation** of the people that can be reproduced is found at the end of this file. The last two pages of this file can copied back and front and be divided into four cards for the people.

1. Light the Advent candle one.
Sign of faith in Christ the Son:
Christ will come again one Day,
Time to think and watch and pray.

Refrain: Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christ's own light.

2. Light the Advent candle two.
Sign of love for me and you.
Christ will come on clouds of light,
So we wait that wondrous sight.
3. Light the Advent candle three.
Sign of hope and harmony.
Christ will come to bring God's peace,
So we pray that strife will cease.
4. Light the Advent candle four.
Sign of joy for evermore.
Christ will come in glory bright,
As he came on Christmas night.

Original lyrics and refrain written by Mary Lu Walker.
Verses by John G. Hibbard.

**The Blessing and Lighting
of the Advent Wreath**

First Sunday of Advent

Blessing and Lighting of the Advent Wreath

On the First Sunday of Advent, the people may be invited to gather around or near the Advent Wreath. Then the priest and the ministers enter.

INTRODUCTION

The priest may use the one or both of the following verses as an invitation to prayer:

Blessed be the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Now and forever.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Who made heaven and earth.

The priest introduces the celebration, using these or similar words:

**My brothers and sisters,
during this time of Advent we wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory.
Today, as we ask God to bless this wreath,
let us pray that the Lord will pour out his grace upon us
so that we may be watchful in prayer
as witnesses to Jesus, the Lord of light and love,
who has taken on our human flesh
to bring salvation to all people.**

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND BLESSING

Then priest says:

Let us pray.

After a moment of silence, the priest says the following prayer:

**God of hope and love,
who sent your only-begotten Son to save us from our sins
and to be the light in our darkness,
grant we pray, that on this day which Christ has made his own,
you bless + this wreath,
whose green branches recall your unfailing love,
and whose candles reflect Jesus' presence among us.
As we await his return in glory,
we ask that the flame of your Spirit may rise in our hearts,
making us children of the light, alert and watchful in prayer.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

All answer: Amen.

The priest then sprinkles the Wreath with Holy Water.

Then the first candle is lit. The priest may say one of the following:

**May Jesus Christ, coming in the glory of eternal light,
overcome the darkness of sin and sorrow.**

**Or: In the growing darkness of these Advent days,
may the light of this candle and these evergreen branches
assure us that Christ, the eternal day and light,
will come again in glory
with salvation for all people.**

**Or: The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep darkness
a great light has shone.**

All may sing together:

Light the Advent candle one.
Sign of faith in Christ the Son:
Christ will come again one Day,
Time to think, and watch and pray.

Refrain:

Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christ's own light.

CONCLUSION

The priest may conclude with the following:

**As those who eagerly await the Banquet of the Lord in heaven
and the pledge of salvation,
let us go in faith to the Altar of the Lord.**

All join in singing the Opening Hymn.

Second Sunday of Advent

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

On the Second Sunday of Advent, the people may be invited to gather around or near the Advent Wreath for the lighting of the candle. Then the priest and the ministers enter.

INTRODUCTION

The priest may use the one or both of the following verses as an invitation to prayer:

Blessed be the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Now and forever.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Who made heaven and earth.

The priest introduces the celebration, using these or similar words:

**My brothers and sisters,
as the Advent Wreath encourages us to wait in joyful hope
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory,
let us continue to be watchful in prayer
and active in good deeds,
as faithful witnesses to Jesus,
who has taken on our human flesh
to bring salvation to all people.**

PRAYER OF PRAISE

Then priest says:

Let us pray.

After a moment of silence, the priest says the following prayer:

**God of light and hope,
look with love upon your people,
and fill them with the Spirit of Jesus
that they may love and serve you in your kingdom.
Protect us during this week, we humbly ask,
and keep us watchful in prayer
as we joyfully await the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
who is the light of the world.
He lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

The people answer: Amen.

Then the second candle is lit. The priest may say:

**May Jesus Christ, coming in the glory of eternal light,
overcome the darkness of sin and sorrow.**

**Or: In the growing darkness of these Advent days,
may the light of these candles and these evergreen branches
assure us that Christ, the eternal day and light,
will come again in glory
with salvation for his people.**

**Or: The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep darkness
a great light has shone.**

Then all may sing together:

Light the Advent candle two.
Sign of love for me and you.
Christ will come on clouds of light,
So we wait that wondrous sight.

Refrain:

Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christ's own light.

CONCLUSION

The priest may conclude with the following:

**As those who prepare the way of the Lord,
by our participation in the Banquet of eternal life,
let us go in love to the Altar of the Lord.**

All join in singing the Opening Hymn.

Third Sunday of Advent

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

On the Third Sunday of Advent, the people may be invited to gather around or near the Advent Wreath for the lighting of the candle. Then the priest and the ministers enter.

INTRODUCTION

The priest may use the one or both of the following verses as an invitation to prayer:

Blessed be the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Now and forever.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Who made heaven and earth.

The priest introduces the celebration, using these or similar words:

**My brothers and sisters,
as we gather in joy during this Advent Season,
let us pray that God will make us faithful witnesses to Jesus,
who will come again in glory.
May he who has taken on our human flesh
to bring salvation to all people,
prepare us to recognize his presence among us.**

PRAYER OF PRAISE

Then priest says:

Let us pray.

After a moment of silence, the priest says the following prayer:

**Almighty and eternal God,
who give us this joyful day
of celebrating the death and resurrection of your Son,
grant, we humbly pray,
that your Son will brighten our way to your kingdom
and your Spirit will inflame our hearts
with deeds of charity and justice,
to build up your kingdom on earth.**

**Glory and praise to you, O loving God,
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.**

The people answer: Amen.

Then the third candle is lit. The priest may say:

**May Jesus Christ, coming in the glory of eternal light,
overcome the darkness of sin and sorrow.**

Or: In the growing darkness of these Advent days,
may the light of these candles and these evergreen branches
assure us that Christ, the eternal day and light,
will come again in glory
with salvation for his people.

Or: The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep darkness
a great light has shone.

Then all may sing together:

Light the Advent candle three.
Sign of hope and harmony.
Christ will come to bring God's peace,
So we pray that strife will cease.

Refrain:

Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christ's own light.

CONCLUSION

The priest may conclude with the following:

**The Lord is near! Rejoice and be glad!
As we await the Banquet of eternal life,
let us go forth in hope to the Altar of the Lord.**

All join in singing the Opening Hymn.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the people may be invited to gather around or near the Advent Wreath for the lighting of the candle. Then the priest and the ministers enter.

INTRODUCTION

The priest may use the one or both of the following verses as an invitation to prayer:

Blessed be the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Now and forever.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

The people respond: Who made heaven and earth.

The priest introduces the celebration, using these or similar words:

**My brothers and sisters,
the time is drawing near and our salvation is close at hand;
soon we will rejoice and celebrate
the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in human flesh
as the Saviour of the world.
Once again we pray that God will keep us alert and watchful
as vigilant and zealous witnesses to Jesus,
who is the Lord of light and love.**

PRAYER OF PRAISE

Then priest says:

Let us pray.

After a moment of silence, the priest says the following prayer:

**Almighty and eternal God,
whose eternal Son came down from heaven
and took flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary
as the revelation of your glory,
grant, we humbly pray,
that you will keep us watchful in prayer
and alert to his return in glory,
so that when he comes to establish your unending reign,
he may find us producing the fruits of your kingdom.**

**Glory and praise to you, O loving God,
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

All answer: Amen.

Then the fourth candle is lit. The priest may say:

**May Jesus Christ, coming in the glory of eternal light,
overcome the darkness of sin and sorrow.**

Or: In the growing darkness of these Advent days,
may the light of these candles and these evergreen branches
assure us that Christ, the eternal day and light,
will come again in glory
with salvation for his people.

Or: The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep darkness
a great light has shone.

Then all may sing together:

Light the Advent candle four.
Sign of joy for evermore.
Christ will come in glory bright,
As he came on Christmas night.

Refrain:

Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christ's own light.

CONCLUSION

The priest may conclude with the following:

**The Saviour is at hand. Rejoice and be glad!
In joy let us approach the Banquet of eternal life,
as we go to the Altar of the Lord.**

All join in singing the Opening Hymn.



Advent Prayer Before Mass

*All gather around or face the
Advent Wreath*

Priest: Blessed be the name of the Lord,
People: **Now and forever.**
Priest: Our help is in the name of the Lord,
People: **Who made heaven and earth.**

Blessing or Prayer over the Wreath

All sing:

Week 1: **Light the Advent candle one.
Sign of faith in Christ the Son:
Christ will come again one Day,
Time to think, and watch and pray.**

Refrain: **Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
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Fill our hearts with Christ's own light.**

All sing:

Week 2. **Light the Advent candle two.
Sign of love for me and you.
Christ will come on clouds of light,
So we wait this wondrous sight.**

Refrain: **Candle, candle, burning bright,
Shining in the cold winter night.
Candle, candle, burning bright,
Fill our hearts with Christ's own light.**

Week 3. **Light the Advent candle three.
Sign of hope and harmony.
Christ will come to bring God's peace,
So we pray that strife will cease.**

Refrain:

Week 4. **Light the Advent candle four.
Sign of joy for evermore.
Christ will come in glory bright,
As he came on Christmas night.**

Refrain:

All sing:

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