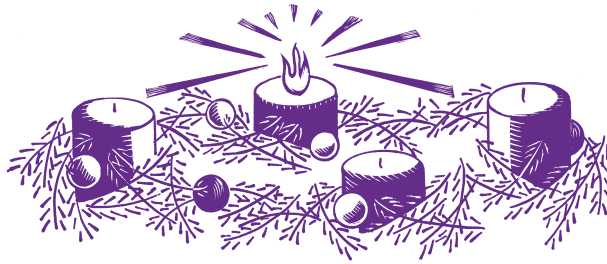


Awaiting the Light

Greetings as we begin embracing winter!

The season of Advent lasts four short weeks. Nevertheless, it offers wonderful opportunities for us to center ourselves, find stillness, and prepare to welcome Christ into our midst.

Creating time for peace and quiet is challenging in our plugged in, on-the-go culture. The classic home observance of Advent—the lighting of our



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family wreath—can be one place of silence and peace in the midst of holiday, consumer hubbub.

Your wreath can be simple or elaborate. You can use a circlet of evergreen boughs, holly, or mountain laurel or a ready-made, artificial green wreath. The color reminds us that while the earth has become dormant and quiet and the leaves have fallen, our life is everlasting in Jesus Christ. If you don't have a wreath, have the chil-

dren draw a picture of a wreath on a large piece of paper that can serve as a placemat on which you will place the candles in candle holders.

The four candles represent the four Sundays, and a lit candle is added each week. There are

three violet candles and one rose candle for “Gaudete” Sunday, in which we are reminded in the liturgy to “Rejoice in the Lord always.” The candles remind us that although we are journeying to the darkest nights of the year, we believe that Jesus has brought light and life into the darkness.

Find a prayer to recite together, or alternate as the prayer leader, as your family lights the candles each night. Consider using the short prayer called the “Collect” that starts the Mass each week. Sing a verse of the traditional hymn “O Come, O Come Emmanuel,” trying a different one each week. Light your wreath as a table grace to start your meal, or as an evening activity around which the family can gather as the day comes to a close.

Notice how the light increases as we add candles with each passing week. How is this light growing in us? “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!” and enlighten us as we wait for you.