

From the Pastor



Once again we enter the holy season of Advent, our spiritual preparation for the celebration of the Birthday of our Lord, Jesus Christ. One of the key themes for Advent is that God is faithful; he will fulfill his promises.

Maybe the most familiar and universal symbol of this beautiful truth is the Advent wreath with its four candles, which Christians have been using for more than 1000 years. Its circular shape gives it no beginning or end - perfectly symbolizing the eternity of God and his love, and the everlasting life that Christ wants to give all of us. The different types of branches traditionally used in Advent wreaths are all from evergreen trees, trees that remain green even during the coldest, darkest days of winter. They remind us that Christ's love remains fresh and strong even in life's most difficult moments - He never abandons us.

Traditional wreaths include laurel and holly branches. The laurel branch was an ancient symbol of victory; it reminds us that on the first Christmas Christ came to bring victory over sin and Satan. The holly branches are bordered with small, prickly edges, reminding us of Christ's crown of thorns, of the suffering by which he won his victory over sin and evil.

The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. Some traditions also say that they represent the four thousand years that Christians used to believe passed between the Fall of Adam and Eve and the Birth of Jesus. Their light represents Christ himself, who is the light of the world: his Word shows us how we should live, and his love, expressed especially in the Eucharist, fills our hearts with comfort, like the warmth of a supernatural fire. We light the candles gradually throughout Advent, because we know that the joy of salvation doesn't come fully into our lives all at once. Rather, life as a Christian is a journey, a relationship with Jesus that has to be constantly renewed, just as a new candle is lit each week. If we are faithful to this friendship and don't abandon our journey, the fullness of joy will eventually be ours.

Christ has promised us all of this, and He wants us to rejoice in these promises, confident that since He is faithful, He can and will fulfill them. In our response to these great mysteries we keep learning about our place in the history of salvation of the humankind, we continue our spiritual journey by getting closer to God, especially through the sacrament of reconciliation.

May we all have a peaceful and fruitful Advent.

+ Father Roger