

First Sunday of Advent – December 2 & 3, 2017 – Reflection

For more than a millennium and a half, Christians have kept the season of watching and waiting for the coming of God the Savior, Jesus, the Light of the World.

Advent ... Come, Lord Jesus - come and be born in our hearts.

THE ADVENT WREATH:

For four thousand years, the children of Adam and Eve, the children of Abraham and Sara, the tribes led by Moses and Aaron and Miriam waited and watched and prayed: the Messiah - when would He come; the Messiah - who would He be; the Messiah - maybe next year. For four thousand years, the Chosen People waited and watched and prayed.

Our Advent Wreath remembers the waiting and longing of our older Jewish brothers and sisters. The wreath holds four candles which are lit over the four weeks of Advent. There are three purple candles and one rose candle, each representing one thousand years. Added together, the four candles symbolize the four thousand years that humanity waited for the Savior.

Purple is a liturgical color used to signify a time of penance, sacrifice, and prayer. During the first two and the last weeks of Advent, we light purple candles. The Third Sunday of Advent is called *Gaudete Sunday* which means "Rejoice". On this day, we celebrate that our waiting for

Christmas is almost over. Rose is a liturgical color that is used to signify joy in the midst of penance and sacrifice and so, on the Third Sunday of Advent, we light the rose candle.

As a whole, these candles represent the coming of Christ into the world, but each candle has a special meaning:

- 1) First purple - "PROPHECY CANDLE" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah who foretold the birth of Christ; it is lit in HOPE;
- 2) Second purple - "BETHLEHEM CANDLE" in remembrance of Christ's manger; it is lit in LOVE;
- 3) Third rose - "SHEPHERDS CANDLE" in remembrance of the first poor people who rejoiced to see the Messiah; it is lit in JOY;
- 4) Fourth purple - "ANGELS CANDLE" in remembrance of the song of the heavenly host on the night of the Savior's birth; it is lit in PEACE.

The CIRCLE of the wreath reminds of the endless, unbroken love of God for His people.

The EVERGREENS remind us of our eternal life in Christ.

HOLLY LEAVES represent the sharpness of the crown of thorns from the Passion of Jesus, and their RED BERRIES speak of the blood He shed for our sins upon the Cross.

Finally, PINECONES and FLOWERS symbolize Christ's Resurrection, and the RIBBONS the shroud and burial cloths He left behind.

The Advent Season - let us watch and be ready. The Advent Wreath - let us pray and bless and light and sing for the time of your exile and darkness is ended, your Savior stands close at hand.