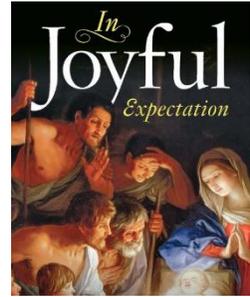


Advent

Advent has a twofold nature: It prepares us for Christmas, when we recall Christ's first coming among us, and it is also a time when we look forward to his second coming at the end of ages. Advent is a season of joyful expectation.



Advent, the Church's new year, is an invitation to wake up! This can be a turn-around time for us. Now is the time to understand ourselves more completely. Now is the time to improve our relationships with peers and with God.

Before Jesus came, the people of Israel waited and prayed for the Messiah, who would free them from foreign rulers. During Advent, the Scripture readings tell us about Israel's desire for the Messiah promised by God and about the Church's yearning for Jesus to come again as he promised.



The Advent wreath is a sign of our waiting. Its green branches, shaped into a circle, are a sign of life. The three purple candles remind us to make our best preparations for Jesus. The pink candle on the third Sunday of Advent shows our joy that Jesus' birthday is almost here. The lighted candles represent Jesus, the Light of the world. With great joy we receive him after an Advent of waiting.

Another, now somewhat commercialized, symbol of Advent is the Christmas lights that we see lighting up our houses and places of business. Although not all of us who put up these colorful lights may realize their significance, what they are saying is "We are Christians waiting for Jesus". It can be very comforting to know that there are so many people that are sharing in our Advent journey. It can also; however, be quite discomfoting to realize that when I put up my Christmas lights, it is supposed to mean more than a desire to promote pretty decorations.



How do I show through my actions and words that I am truly and joyfully waiting for Jesus to come into my life in an ever deeper and more loving way?

During Advent we are waiting for Jesus. It is equally true that Jesus is waiting for us. He has been waiting all along, we just need to welcome him.

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