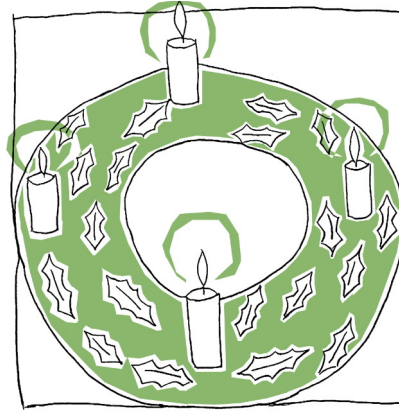


Advent Learning Activity: Advent Wreaths



Activity Objective

To explore the symbolism and meaning of the Advent wreath while creating one to take home.

This activity would work best for the following options:

- ✓ All Ages Opening Learning Experience
- ✓ Whole Group In-depth Learning Experience
- ✓ Age-Specific In-depth Learning Experience (Families with Children, Teens)
- ✓ Learning Center In-depth Activity Option

Supplies and Preparation (Per Wreath)

- A flat base for the wreaths -cardboard or foam board, or a simple grapevine or straw wreath from a craft store.
- Green leaves, cut from construction paper (large enough for participants to write things on and enough to cover their base).
- Three purple candles and one pink, with holders or other means (e.g. holes are carved out in the base of the wreath) to stand them up in the wreath. Option: Use paper candles constructed out of toilet paper rolls covered with colored paper.
- Three purple, one pink, and one white ribbon, long enough to write or draw on.
- One white candle and holder for the center of the wreath.
- Markers, glue.

Activity Plan

Step One: Introduce the Wreath.

[spoken text] *One of the most recognizable Catholic symbols of the Advent season is the Advent wreath.*

The concept of the Advent wreath actually originated in pre-Christian times when people would gather evergreens and light candles to ward off the darkness of winter and serve as a sign of hope that spring would come.

By the 16th century, Catholics in Germany began using the wreath as a sign of Christ's coming. From there the tradition slowly spread throughout the world as Germans immigrated to various countries.

Step Two: Explain and create the circle.

[spoken text] *The circular wreath represents the fact that God has no beginning and no end. The evergreen branches stand for everlasting life.*

Invite participants to write (or draw a picture) on their green leaves of how they see God's presence in the world around them – in people, in events, in nature. If God has always been present and always will be present, where and how do we experience him?

Invite them to paste their leaves on their circular base.

Step Three: The candles.

[spoken text]. *Four candles – representing Christ as the light of the world – adorn the wreath. Traditionally, three of the candles are purple, a sign of penance. These candles are lit on the first, second and fourth weeks of Advent.*

On the third week a rose (pink) candle is lit. This week is known as "Gaudete" Sunday, Latin for "rejoice." The rose candle symbolizes joy. Make sure to check out the priest's vestments at Mass on this Sunday. He might be wearing rose to match the rose candle that you will be lighting.

Invite participants to write on their ribbons, one per candle (matching the purple ribbons to the purple candles and the pink ribbon to the pink candle), how they are called to be the light of Christ as they prepare for and celebrate Christmas. What are we called to do to show the world that Christ's light is carried through his people? What qualities are we called to witness to?

Invite participants to tie the ribbons onto their candles and to set their candles in their holders on the wreaths.

Step Four: The Jesus Candle.

[spoken text] *In addition to these four candles, many people place a white candle in the center of their Advent wreath. This candle is called the Christ candle and is lit on Christmas Day to represent the birth of Christ.*

Invite participants to write on the white ribbon the names of people who have helped them to know Jesus. Invite the participants to tie the ribbons onto their white candles and to set their white candle into the middle of their wreath.

Step Five: Bless the Wreaths

Invite participants to hold their wreaths as you pray this blessing over the wreaths:

Loving God, bless these wreaths. May they remind us to celebrate your presence in our lives, call us to serve your people in new ways, and challenge us to share the Good News of your Son Jesus with all we meet. We ask this prayer in Jesus' name, Amen.