

Advent: Themes and symbolism

Advent is not a penitential season (unlike Lent). It is a season of **expectation** and **preparation** as the Church remembers and celebrates Christ's first coming (adventus), while also looking forward Christ's final coming at the end of time, as judge.

Most Advent resources not only direct us to the remembrance of Jesus' birth, but also challenge the modern reluctance to face the theme of God's judgement.

The FOUTH LAST THINGS have traditionally been the focus of Advent meditations:

- Death
- Judgement
- Heaven
- Hell

In many churches the liturgical colour is purple; in some places this has been replaced with blue (the old English usage).

The Advent wreath is a relatively new introduction to our liturgies – with its origins in northern Europe in the 18th century. Eventually finding its way here to Canada, the tradition continues, with the lighting of another candle on the wreath each Sunday in Advent. The final, 5th candle is the 'Christ Candle', lit on the celebration of the Feast of the Birth of Christ (Christ-mass).

The wreath also carries with it certain themes:

Advent 1	- Hope (purple or blue candle)
Advent 2	- Peace (purple or blue candle)
Advent 3	- Joy (pink candle) – <i>Gaudete</i> ('Rejoice' Sunday)
Advent 4	- Love (purple candle)
Christmas Day	- The Christ Candle (white candle)

The Revised Common Lectionary also lends itself themes for each Sunday in Advent:

Advent 1	The Patriarchs
Advent 2	The Prophets
Advent 3	John the Baptist
Advent 4	The Blessed Virgin Mary
Christmas Day	The Christ

