

Advent Traditions: Advent Wreath

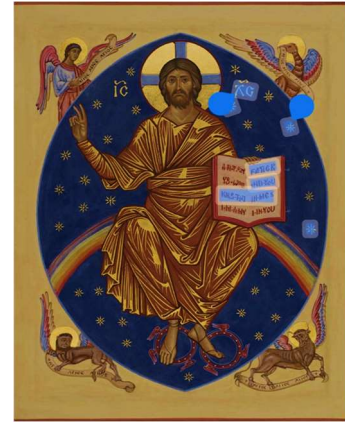
'The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it': so writes St John in his Gospel of the coming of Christ into the world. This is symbolised by the increasing light on the Advent wreath, or Advent crown, as more candles are lighted, and the celebration of the Lord's Nativity draws ever closer. The origins of the wreath are obscure and possibly pagan, reminding us of the universal need for light at this darkest time of the year, a need that Christ came to fulfil in an eternal rather than an earthly sense. By the Middle Ages, the wreath had developed into its present form: five candles, one for each Sunday of Advent and one for Christmas; three purple, one pink and one white, following the liturgical colours of each of these days. The circle of the wreath symbolises the unending love of Christ, and perhaps the ever-circling year until his return. The evergreen decorations are a reminder of eternal life that Christ promises to those who live in the light of his love.

Saints & Heroes: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – 8th December

Even well-catechized Christians often get confused about the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, thinking that 'conception' refers to Jesus being conceived in the womb of his mother, the Virgin Mary. Instead, the 'Immaculate Conception' is a title used to describe the conception of the Virgin Mary herself, in the womb of her mother, St Anne: it was Mary who was conceived 'immaculately'. Indeed, in this feast we celebrate that great and unique privilege by which Mary was preserved from Original Sin, which is otherwise common to the whole human race – she was preserved from sin right from that first moment of her life. In Mary, God therefore did for the second Eve what he had done for the first. This time, however, he did it in order that eventually Mary might bear within herself the author of her salvation, Our Lord Jesus Christ. So we give thanks for the role of Mary, Jesus' mother and ours, without whom our own salvation would simply not have happened.

3rd December 2023

First Sunday of Advent



Stay Awake!

Advent is come, and the new liturgical year begins. Advent means 'coming', which makes this a season of great spiritual dynamism. Christ is coming in two ways: he is coming at his holy incarnation (and so we must make spiritual preparation for the Feast), but he is also coming at the Last as Judge and King. It is this spiritual theme that is strongest at the beginning of the Advent season, which is why we hear in today's Gospel the summons to be renewed in vigilance and attentiveness to what God is about to do. It is why the cry to the Church in these Advent weeks is 'stay awake!' and the prayer of the Church in these Advent weeks is 'Come, Lord, come.' We are to keep awake and watchful 'because you do not know when the master is coming'.

Today's Gospel: St. Mark 13:24-end

Collect for the First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead; we may rise to the life immortal; through the same Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.