

CLIFF NOTES

by Fr. Clifford Smith

Advent: A Season of Waiting ... the beginning of the Church Year, and preparation for the coming of Christ

The theme of Advent is, “**Stay awake**”. Christ is going to come back. We don’t know when, but it’s an obvious precaution to be prepared at any time. Common sense tells us that it doesn’t mean quitting our jobs, or having sleepless nights. It means we prepare by putting our life and our world in order so that we can sleep soundly. “**Staying awake**,” means being aware that we are waiting for Jesus to come back.

We are watchful and ready.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word meaning “*coming*.” The Lord has come and has promised to come again.

We remember that every year at this time we celebrate his first coming ... sometimes we can lose the feeling of expectation and joyful anticipation, because at the end of the season, everything seems to return to normal again.

During Advent we recall the history of God’s people and reflect on how the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled. This gives us a background for the present. In Advent we reflect on the past record of God’s promises and begin to understand what it means to us now in our own time, and our future and that of our world.

The Season of Advent

In the season of Advent, we are invited by the Prophet Isaiah: “*Say to those who are fearful of heart. Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God ... will come and save you*” (Is 35,4).

Advent begins with Sunday, December 2, 2007 this year ... the Sunday following Christ the King. It lasts until the eve of December 24, 2007.

As Christmas approaches, it becomes more urgent to prepare our hearts to welcome the Messiah. The one awaited by the people will certainly come and his salvation will be for us all.

Advent gives us a twofold vision; it looks back to the first coming of Christ at Bethlehem, and it looks to the future when Christ will come again. In the time between these two events we find meaning for our lives as Christians.

It is the beginning of the Church Year, starting four Sundays before December 25th. It is a time to remember the birth of the Christ Child & the future Second Coming of Christ as Judge of the World.

The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is primarily a home tradition that has found a place in Advent celebrations in Church. The Advent wreath has four candles: three purple and one pink. There may be a fifth white candle in the center. The candles are normally set in a wreath of evergreen branches. The circular shape as a sign of God’s everlasting love; the evergreen as a sign of life even in the cold of winter.

The first purple candle is lit on the First Sunday in Advent. On the Second Sunday two purple candles are lit. On the Third Sunday the two purple candles are relit along with the pink candle. This is Gaudete Sunday ... a day of joy because Christmas is so close. On the Fourth Sunday in Advent all the candles are lit.