

Advent - A new year in the church and a new season in the church year.

Liturgical Year review:

- What are the other seasons in the church year?
(Christmas, Ordinary Time, Lent, Easter)
- Why do we celebrate different seasons?
(The mystery of God is so big that we look at it from different perspectives in order to better understand it. We go through seasons in our life, times when we are joyful, sad, repentant, etc; these are reflected in the Church year)
- What makes them different?
(The tone of the readings, what we do, how we relate)
- What makes Advent different than the rest of the year?
(Advent is a preparation for Jesus to be born for the only time as a human being to experience all that we experience so that we might better understand what it can mean to be fully human)

Advent Explanation:

1. The word Advent means “approaching, moving forward” (like advance) what are we approaching? Christmas/the birth of Christ
2. Advent comes at the darkest time of the year in this part of the world, when we most need a reminder of light, warmth and joy, which we express through candles and lights in our homes. In the southern hemisphere, advent comes as the rainy season is coming to an end, the earth is once again renewed and is lush and green, a reminder that God’s presence renews.
3. We use an advent wreath to mark the weeks of preparation; it is round to symbolize God’s eternal presence and the cyclical nature of life. We light 2 purple candles, a pink candle, another purple candle and a white candle on Christmas Day. Purple symbolizes waiting and pink represents joy.
4. The candles each have additional symbolism, things to remember each week:
1st week – candle of HOPE we think of the Old Testament ancestors of Jesus who prophesied Jesus’ coming as the King of Kings (royalty= purple)
2nd week – candle of PEACE we think of Jesus born in Bethlehem, it is also purple to remind us that it was a King who was born in the manger
3rd week – candle of JOY we remember the shepherds, common people who heard the message of the angels telling of God’s love and faithfulness
4th week – candle of LOVE we remember Mary as she heard the glad tidings and saw the Heavenly hosts sing praises for her newborn son.

For Reflection or Discussion:

- What sort of traditions do you have for advent? How do they help you prepare?
- What sort of preparations have you made for Christmas?
- What does decorating our homes have to do with Advent and Christmas?
(Just as the innkeeper welcomed Mary and Joseph we too welcome people into our homes and because we love them, we want to make our homes as special as we can. The way your environment looks is a reflection of how you are on the inside.)
- Other than decorating and buying gifts, how can we prepare spiritually?
(Pray, go to Confession, go to Mass, etc.)