

*Forming Mature Disciples*

# Understanding the Mass

November 2023 Vol. 3



To become better disciples, we all need to commit to learning more about our faith and deepening our relationship with Jesus and Mary. As a community of believers, we continue to seek opportunities to supplement our existing adult formation offerings. This is the third in a series of monthly faith formation articles. The objective of the planned series of articles is to provide our parishioners with further insights on the tenets of our faith. This article focuses on the Season of Advent which begins on Sunday, December 3 and ends December 24.

Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation and marks the beginning of the liturgical year of the Catholic Church. It lasts four weeks, leading up to Christmas. During this time, we are called to direct our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming and to celebrate the anniversary of His birth. We encourage you to take the time to reflect on this article as well as reflect on any questions you might have about your faith or topics that we can address in future articles. Even if you feel you understand the monthly topic, please take the time to be open to the Holy Spirit's intervention to help you deepen your understanding.



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**Introduction to Advent-** The Advent Season encourages reflection on the meaning of Christ's birth and the hope, love, joy, and peace that He brings into the world. Our Advent readings call us to be alert and ready, and not weighed down and distracted by cares of this world because we do not know the day or the hour when He will come again to judge the living and the dead.



**The Advent Wreath-** Throughout the Advent Season, the Advent Wreath plays an important sacramental role i.e., it directs our hearts and minds to God. Its circular shape symbolizes eternity, and the evergreen branches represent God's everlasting love. The candles on the wreath mark the passage of time and the growing anticipation of Christ's birth.

There are three purple candles and one pink (rose can also be used). The purple candles remind us of the need to undertake prayer, penance, preparatory sacrifices, and good works as we prepare for Christ's return. The pink candle represents the half-way point of the season and reminds us to rejoice in the coming of Our Lord and Savior. In addition, in some Churches on Christmas day a white candle is lit symbolizing the birth of Christ and is known as the Christ Candle.



**First Sunday of Advent-** The first Sunday of Advent signals the beginning of the season. It's marked by the blessing of the Wreath and the lighting of the first Advent candle, symbolizing hope. This event encourages believers to reflect on the hope that the coming of Christ brings to the world.



**Second Sunday of Advent-** The second Sunday of Advent is marked by the lighting of the second Advent candle, which symbolizes peace. This event emphasizes the peace that Jesus brings to our lives and the world, as He is often referred to as the "Prince of Peace".



**Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday)-** Gaudete Sunday, or the third Sunday of Advent, is a day of rejoicing. The third Advent candle is pink, symbolizing joy. This event encourages us to find joy in the anticipation of Christ's arrival and the fulfillment of God's promises.



**Fourth Sunday of Advent-** On the fourth Sunday, the fourth Advent candle is lit, symbolizing love. This event reminds us of God's boundless love for humanity, as exemplified in the birth of Jesus, who is the embodiment of divine love.



**Christmas Eve-** As Advent culminates on December 24th, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus during the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve. Some Churches mark this event by lighting and placing a white candle, the Christ Candle, in the center. This candle represents the birth of Christ and the triumph of light over darkness.

If you have suggestion for a topic or topics you would like to be the subject of a future article or have any questions on this article please contact us via email at [engagingdisciples@ihmparish.net](mailto:engagingdisciples@ihmparish.net)