

ADVENT READING
First Sunday In Advent
Prophet Candle

Introduction The first Advent candle is traditionally called the Prophecy Candle. We rejoice that God prepares our lives through prophecy to receive Christ when he comes. The words from Isaiah 9:2-7 prepare us to receive Christ as the child who comes to us in Bethlehem. Isaiah's words also prepare us to receive Christ when he comes again in power. At that time he will fulfill the promise to be Prince of Peace and Wonderful Counselor for all times and there will truly be no end to his gracious kingdom.

Scripture Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people who walked in darkness
 have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness --
 on them light has shined.

³ You have multiplied the nation,
 you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
 as with joy at the harvest,
 as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴ For the yoke of their burden,
 and the bar across their shoulders,
 the rod of their oppressor,
 you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors
 and all the garments rolled in blood
 shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For a child has been born for us,
 a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
 and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ His authority shall grow continually,
 and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
 He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
 from this time onward and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Prayer Gracious Lord, prepare our lives to receive your beloved Son as he comes to us in his birth and as he will come again in power at the close of the age. Inspire us through prophecy to await him with joy. Amen.

(The first candle is lit while Canticle 7 is sung)

ADVENT READING
Second Sunday in Advent
Bethlehem Candle

Introduction The second advent candle is traditionally called the Bethlehem Candle. Bethlehem reminds us that God comes to us in the humble and simple. Bethlehem was in the territory of one of the least influential tribes of Judah, yet out of Bethlehem comes the King of Kings. Bethlehem reminds us that Jesus was born in a small town; that he was born in a stable; that he was born to people of no fame. Bethlehem is God's statement that God does great and wonderful things from humble beginnings.

Scripture Micah 5:2-4

² But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴ And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

Prayer Gracious Lord, prepare our lives to receive your beloved Son as he comes to us in humble, simple and unexpected ways. Let us love the humble ones in our time and place. Let us be humble witnesses of your power and await him with joy. Amen.
(Two candles are lit as Canticle 7 is sung)

ADVENT READING
Third Sunday in Advent
Shepherd Candle

Introduction The third advent candle is traditionally called the Shepherd Candle. The shepherds sat on a quiet hilltop watching their sheep by night. They were common people like you and me. The angels announce the good news of Jesus' birth to them in the midst of their work. They respond with wonder, curiosity and faith as they seek the savior whom the angles proclaimed. The shepherds are the faithful people of God who seek their savior in the baby Jesus.

Scripture Luke 2:15-20

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. (NRSV)

Prayer Gracious Lord, let us receive the message of your coming with joy and wonder. Make us curious to find out all that we can about you. Help us to discover the places I the midst of our daily lives where you meet us with your gospel. Lead us to tell others all that we have heard and seen, as it has been told to us. Amen.

(Three candles are lit as Canticle 7 is sung)

ADVENT READING
Fourth Sunday in Advent
Angel Candle

Introduction The fourth candle is traditionally called the Angel Candle. The angels are God's messengers who announce the coming of the Lord. The angel, Gabriel, spoke to Mary and Joseph to announce the birth of Jesus. The angels sang out with joy to proclaim Jesus' birth to the shepherds. The angel Michael announces the coming of Christ again in the Revelation to John. We hear angels' voices even today and wait with joy for Jesus.

Scripture Luke 2:8-14

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see -- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

Prayer Gracious Lord, let your angels' voices call to us now that we may receive good news of great joy. May that joyful good news of Jesus and his coming to Bethlehem change our lives and give us hope for when he comes again in power. Amen.

(Four candles are lit as Canticle 7 is sung)