

Advent Traditions

The 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.

Prayers to Remember

O God, our Judge and Saviour, set before us the vision of your purity, and let us see our sins in the light of your holiness. Pierce our self-contentment with the shafts of your burning love, and let that love consume in us all that hinders us from perfect service of your cause; for as your holiness is our judgement, so are your wounds our salvation. Amen.

From 'New Every Morning'.

From the Fathers

'We do not seek glory now, in the present, but we look for future glory, as Saint Paul instructs us when he says: by hope we were saved. Now hope which is seen is not hope; how can a man hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it in patience. Patient waiting is necessary if we are to be perfected in what we have begun to be, and if we are to receive from God what we hope for and believe.'

St Cyprian, A Treatise on the Value of Patience

29th November
2020

The First Sunday
of Advent

The Patriarchs



By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. (Hebrews 11.8)

When the author of the Letter to the Hebrews looks for examples of people who have been steadfast in their faith, he looks first at the Patriarchs, those characters in the Old Testament who first grasp the purpose and promise of God. At the very beginning of the Bible they show us that the creator God is also the covenant God, the God who makes promises with his people – and these are promises that can be trusted.

In particular he holds up the story of Abraham and Sarah, for God intervenes in their lives to show that, not only is he trustworthy, but that he creates life where there was none. The Patriarchs show us that God is faithful and to be trusted, and so they prepare us to understand his actions in Jesus. He is the one in whom all God's promises are met, and God had been preparing the way for that coming from the dawn of creation. Give thanks for those who have prepared the way for God in your life, those who first shared their faith with you, and those who've nurtured you in the ways of holiness.