

The Historical and Liturgical Aspects of Advent

Dr. S. Arokiaraj
St. Paul's Seminary, Trichy

1. ADVENT AND LITURGICAL YEAR

What is Liturgical Year? The Liturgical Year is arrangement made by the Church *to commemorate, to celebrate, to re-enact and to re-actualize* all the wonderful deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation, especially the Paschal Mysteries of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ over a period of one year. The various seasons of this Liturgical Year are as follows:

1.1. Advent Season

The Liturgical Year of the Church always begins with the Advent Season. It begins actually around the 30th of November on the Sunday that comes immediately after the feast of 'Christ, the King'. The Advent, which is a period of preparation for Christmas, ends on the 24th of December.

1.2. Christmas Season

It begins with the feast of Christmas, runs the Octave of Christmas (for 8 days) and ends with the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord in the second week of January. During this period we also celebrate the feasts of Holy Innocents; Holy Family; Mary-Mother of God and Epiphany.

1.3. Ordinary Time - I

It begins on the next day after the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord and runs through a period of roughly 5 to 9 weeks. The duration of this season becomes shorter or longer depending upon the great Feast of Easter, which is celebrated between the third week of March and the last week of April.

1.4. Lenten Season

It begins on the Wednesday of the last week of the "Ordinary Time - I." On this day we celebrate the Ash Wednesday. This season of prayer, penance and charity extends up to 40 days. Towards the end, we celebrate the Holy Week and the Holy Triduum. In other words, this Lenten Season extends from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil).

1.5. Easter Season

It begins on the Easter Sunday, runs through the Easter Octave and ends with the Feast of Pentecost. It is a joyful season of 50 days. On the 40th day (or on the Sunday that precedes Pentecost) we celebrate the Feast of Ascension.

1.6. Ordinary Time - II

It begins on the following day of the Feast of Pentecost. This second part of the Ordinary Time of the Year is resumed and counted with the following week, where we had ended the ORDINARY TIME - I. For example, if we had ended the ORDINARY TIME - I with the 6th Week, we will now begin the ORDINARY TIME - II with the 7th Week of Ordinary Time. We celebrate the Feast of "Christ-the King" on the 34th Sunday of Ordinary Time. This season will end on the Saturday after the Feast of "Christ-the King". On the following day (Sunday) we will begin a New Liturgical Year.

Having thus seen the various seasons of the Liturgical Year, let us now enter into the details of our topic: The Historical and Liturgical development of Advent.

2. MEANING OF "ADVENT"

The term Adventus (Parousia) is a Christian word, which has a pagan origin. The Latin word *adventus* actually means "coming." In its cultic use, it signified the annual coming of divinities into their temples, in order to visit their devotees; the god or goddess, whose statue was offered for veneration, was thought to dwell in the midst of the devotees as long as the ceremony lasted.

The etiquette of the imperial court used also the same term for the first official visit of an important personage at the time of his accession or entrance upon his office. Thus there are Corinthian coins commemorating the *Adventus Augusti* ("The coming of Augustus"), while the Chronographer of 354 designates the day of Constantine's accession to the throne as *Adventus Divi* ("Coming of the godlike one").

Thus '*adventus*' at first meant "the annual coming of gods into their temples and the coming of a king to a part of his kingdom. Such an appearance of the gods or of the rulers was considered to be a time of grace and of royal largesse.

So *Advent* seems to have been introduced into the Christian liturgy as a "time of preparation" to celebrate the Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Usually in the Christian writings of the early centuries and especially in the Vulgate, *Adventus* became the classical term for the coming of Christ among us; both his coming in the flesh, which inaugurated the messianic age, and his coming in glory, which will crown the work of redemption at the end of time. *Adventus*, *Natale*, and *Ephiphania* thus express the same basic reality. But how did the term Adventus come to be used for the liturgical period of preparation for Christmas?¹ Probably, as many of the later feasts were modelled on the pattern of Easter, with some days of preparation and with a week of festivities (known as *Octave*), so also *Advent* must have been placed before Christmas.²

3. DATE OF CHRISTMAS

In the first 300 years of Christian era, the Christians celebrated only the feast of Easter. For the Christian consciousness was filled with the awareness of the central mystery of Christianity, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Paschal realities. In addition to this, the veneration of the martyrs sprang up in the second half of the second century. But from the beginning of the fourth century a change took place and slowly the Christians began to unfold a new aspect of the Christ-event. They began to celebrate Christmas in order to give expression to the mystery of Incarnation. From the Latin sources we come to know that Christmas was called '*Dies Natalis*.'

As for its origin, it may be noted that in the year 274 the Roman emperor Aurelian introduced the feast of the Sun-god on December 25 because of the winter solstice. Slowly, this feast was Christianized by the Christians as Christmas, the *Birth of Jesus* - the True Light and the Sun of the whole world. The prophet Malachi had already spoken of Him as the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2). In John's gospel, Jesus himself says: "I am the light of the world" (Jn 9:5).

As for the date of Christmas, T.J. Talley says the following: "At Rome in 336 it is clear that the nativity itself, December 25, was considered the beginning of the liturgical Year." But "our earliest documentary evidence for the observance of the nativity of Christ on December 25 ... is the Chronograph of 354, an almanac presenting (inter alia) lists of Roman holidays." It has two lists of burial dates, one of Roman bishops and another of martyrs. Both the lists are in the calendrical order and not in the historical order. "The calendar ran as did the *Depositio Martyrum*, from December 25 to December 25, the date to which the martyrs' list assigns the nativity of Christ at Bethlehem. From 336, then, we may say that at Rome the nativity of Christ on December 25 marked the beginning of the liturgical year."

"Indeed, some have supposed that its observance could date from as early as 300 or even earlier and that the place of the origin of the festival

could well have been North Africa, rather than Rome as has most commonly been presumed.”⁷

The spread of this feast to the various Churches was rapid. First of all, it was accepted by the Western Churches. Anti-Arian tendencies were conducive to the acceptance and spread of this feast because of the God-Man nature of Christ. Christmas on December 25 has found acceptance in some of the Eastern Churches only towards the end of the fourth century. The Churches in Egypt, Palestine and Jerusalem accepted December 25 as Christmas day only much later. But a few of the Eastern Churches, like the Armenian Church, still celebrate the Birth of Jesus on January 6.⁸

4. ORIGINS OF THE LITURGICAL ADVENT

4.1. Advent in the Western Churches

“Following the practice of Easter, for which the days of lent are a time of preparation, so too, the Church has introduced the time of advent as a time of preparation for Christmas.”⁹ In other words, “once Christmas had become a popular feast throughout the Church after the 4th century, it did not take long for Advent to evolve as a distinct liturgical season. In ancient times people tended to precede a time of feasting with a time of fasting.”¹⁰

Thus the history of Advent begins first in Spain and especially in Gaul (roughly, today’s France and the Lowlands) by the end of the 4th century. During the 5th century, the people of these regions seem to have felt the need of an ascetical preparation for the feasts of Christmas and Epiphany. This preparation, lasting for three weeks, was doubtless connected originally with the preparation for baptism on Epiphany. An alternative opinion suggests that this feast was approached with forty days of fasting and penance, very similar to Lent. In this background the earliest witness of St. Hilary, which speaks of a “pre-Christmas Lent,” is not considered to be reliable.

As early as 380, the Council of Saragossa asked the faithful to be zealous in attending the church from December 17 to Epiphany. Asceticism,

prayer and more frequent assemblies became characteristics of the preparation for Christmas.¹¹ “As for Advent, the earliest mention of its observance is found in 490. Bishop Perpetuus of Tours wished the faithful to fast three days from November 11 to the feast of Christmas. The councils held in Gaul in the sixth century refer to a penitential period of six weeks before Christmas. During this period, the Christians fasted on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.”¹²

In the fourth century Rome, though there was a pre-Christmas fast (though not necessarily connected to the feast) and there were Ember days, quarterly fasts, the season of Advent did not have an intense penitential character as in Gaul and Spain. Pope Leo the Great (+ 461) connected Christmas with Easter, for Christmas is not a mystery that is distinct and independent from Easter. Rather it links us to the beginning of the Paschal mystery. It is the beginning of the mystery of salvation. Thus, “it was Leo the Great who formally connected the mystery of Christmas with that of the resurrection and made the celebration of Christmas part and parcel of the whole mystery of the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”¹³ As for Pope Gregory the Great, he fixed the Advent season for four weeks. The real architect of Roman Advent practice was Gregory the Great (590-604). He fixed the season of Advent for four weeks (though the Gelasian Sacramentary provides for six Sundays) with seasonal prayers, antiphons, the Mass and the Office lectionary.”¹⁴ Even today, the same is true of the Ambrosian liturgy of Milan which has its text for six Advent Sundays.

Finally, an incident of history contributed to the final development of the season of Advent, as we know today.

In Gaul, there was a Romanizing process for both political and religious reasons. Pepin, the predecessor of Charlemagne, was crowned king of the Frankish territory in 754 by Pope Stephen. In honor of this occasion, Pepin ordered the liturgical books used in his kingdom be replaced by those from Rome. As a result, the *shorter* and *non-penitential* Roman Advent began to spread in Gaul. But when the Roman books were copied for liturgical use,

some of the penitential themes of Advent in the North were mixed with the more joyful themes of the shorter Advent from Rome.

Like his father Pepin, Charlemagne also continued this effort. He borrowed books from Rome for his library in Aachen, where the work of copying was carried out. His advisor, Alcuin, designed substitutes for missing parts with the king's authority. The end result was a continuation of a mixture, neither Frankish nor Roman. In the 10th century, the Church in Rome suffered a serious decline and a period of chaos because of abuses in leadership. Both the clergy and the people lost interest in the liturgical life of the Church.¹⁵

So at the end of the 10th century, under the orders from the Roman emperors Otto I, II and III, the Church of Rome began to reform its weakened liturgical practices by borrowing liturgical books from the (Cluny) monastic centers of the North. Eventually, the liturgical books borrowed from Rome hundreds of years ago were not the same when they returned to Rome. This new liturgy, however, was soon considered authentically Roman. Thus it became the liturgy of the whole Medieval Latin Church. In this way, an Advent of four weeks, with a confused theme of penance and joy, spread from Rome to the universal Church.¹⁶ In this manner, "correlating and stabilizing the Advent practices took some time and what we have today is a blend of practices from different countries, cultures and time frames spanning Spain, Gaul, Rome, Ireland and others."¹⁷

4.2. Advent in the Eastern Churches

"Advent is really a Roman liturgical institution, the Eastern Christians playing only a small role in the formation of the Advent liturgy".¹⁸

This amounts to say the following: "No eastern liturgy has established an Advent cycle comparable to that of the Roman liturgy, that is, one that embraces the messianic expectation in its full extent and open-endedness." It is possible to speak of a preparation for Christmas in the East only in the same sense in which it was practiced in fifth century Gaul, Two rites, the Byzantine and the Syrian, lay greater emphasis on this preparation.

In the *Byzantine liturgy* we may note in particular that commemoration, on the Sunday before Christmas, of “all the Fathers who down the centuries have been pleasing to God, from Adam to Joseph, husband of the Most Holy Mother of God.” All the saints of the old covenant are urged to “lead the dance for the Birth of the Savior.

“In the *Syrian rite* the weeks before Christmas are called the “Weeks of Annunciations.” There are five such weeks among the Western Syrians and four among the Eastern. They recall in succession the annunciation to Zechariah, the annunciation to Mary, followed by the Visitation, the Birth of John the Baptist, and the annunciation to Joseph.”¹⁹

5. ADVENT: ITS ESCHATOLOGICAL DIMENSION

Maranatha is an exclamation translated from the Aramaic in 1 Cor 16:22. It figured significantly in primitive Christian spirituality. It is also clear from its occurrence in *Didache* 10, in primitive Christian liturgy as well. This term is closely related to *parousia* and it has a double meaning, which is a matter of interpretation. In Aramaic (and Syriac) it has two words *marana tha*, a form of imperative oriented towards the future, “Come, our Lord.” The Greek transliteration (*marana tha*) presents an event already completed in the past, “our Lord has come.” It represents today the liturgical celebration of Advent - Christmas - Epiphany cycle.²⁰

The first two Sundays of Advent are connected with the *final parousia*. The last two Sundays focus on the forerunner’s promise of Messiah’s coming. For example, the fourth Sunday has the gospel reading on the Annunciation. In these four weeks the meaning of the coming of the Messiah shifts from the expectation of the consummation of history itself to preparation for the nativity of the Saviour. Thus it is clear that in the Advent/Epiphany complex, the beginning has a strong note of eschatological expectation.²¹

Justin, the martyr, wrote "For the prophets have proclaimed two advents (*parousias*) of His: the one, that which is already past, when He came as a dishonoured and suffering Man; but the second, when, according to prophecy, He shall come from heaven with glory, accompanied by His angelic host."²²

A study of the Roman Advent formularies for Mass and Office enables us to grasp the precise meaning which the popes of the sixth and seventh centuries intended the Advent season to have. In keeping with the original conception of it among the Gauls, the season was first of all a time of preparation for the solemnity of the Coming of the Lord: "that this divine aid . . . may prepare us for the coming feast." But, as the feast of Christmas became increasingly important in the High Middle Ages, Advent also came to be a time of expectation. It fostered a joyful expectation of the feast of the Nativity but with a view to directing the thoughts of Christians above all to the glorious return of the Lord at the end of time.²³

The best symbol of Advent as celebrated in this perspective is the *Etimasia* or empty throne of the Pantocrator, which is so often shown in the mosaics of Rome and Ravenna. From the point on the old pagan term *Adventus* was understood in the biblical and eschatological sense of "Parousia." Christian expectation found spontaneous expression in the prophetic texts that had been inspired by expectation of the Messiah. Isaiah and John the Baptist became the two major voices in the Roman liturgy of Advent.²⁴

So this is a time of joyful expectation to prepare the Christian community for Christmas and also for the second coming of the Lord. "Thus *adventus, natale and epiphania* express the same basic reality - the coming of Jesus Christ into the midst of humanity." Thus, in the course of time, both these tendencies got intermingled and so we have both in the Advent and Christmas liturgies.²⁵ In other words, these two parts intermingle and cannot be fully separated from one another.

6. ADVENT: ITS PENTENTIAL DIMENSION

What interests us most is the spirit of Advent. As we know, it is a time of preparation for Christmas at two levels: (1) for the inner feast of nativity; and (2) a time of hopeful waiting for the second coming of the Lord. It is in this context that the ideals of penance, fasting and conversion were placed before the faithful.

For example, in Gaul, to maintain forty days of fasting, the Advent began on November 11, the feast of St. Martin. Thus it was also known as St. Martin's Lent." Namely, the Advent theme in Gaul "separate from that of Rome, evolved under the influence of the missionaries from Ireland. They promoted a penitential spirit, emphasizing not Jesus' First coming in the Incarnation, but rather his final coming in judgment at the end of times. Purple was used for vestments, and the Alleluia and Glory to God were omitted from the Mass."²⁶

This evolution was also influenced by traditions in the monasteries of Gaul. In 567, a synod at Tours in France clarified the monastic practice of fasting on all Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays during the month of December before Christmas. Fifteen years later, this same tradition of fasting was ordered for the laity from the feast of St. Martin until Christmas."²⁷

In Rome, the season of Advent had a different origin. "By the mid-6th century, the Church in Rome had begun to focus on the December Ember Days that occurred on the Monday, Wednesday and Saturday after the feast of St. Lucy (December 13). These days, a week before the Nativity on December 25, had a distinct penitential theme. The reason lay in a five-day pagan harvest festival of Saturnalia, from December 17th to 23rd. On December 17, sacrifice was offered to Saturn, god of agriculture. The days following were filled with gift exchanges, feasting and excesses. It seems that the Church tried to offset the influence of this popular pagan festival with days of fasting, prayer and penance as it looked ahead to the feast of Nativity on December 25."²⁸

“There is evidence for this short “Advent” coinciding with the pagan Saturnalia. There is an ancient tradition of singing the *O Antiphons* during the Liturgy of Hours on precisely the same days as the pagan Saturnalia. The singing of these O Antiphons, always an Advent tradition, is till popular today and they have become the Alleluia verses for December 17-23: They are as follows:

<i>(O Sapientia)</i>	Come, Wisdom of our God...
<i>(O Adonai)</i>	Come, Leader of Ancient Israel...
<i>(O Radix Jesse)</i>	Come, Flower of Jesse’s Stem...
<i>(O Clavis David)</i>	Come, Key of David...
<i>(O Oriens)</i>	Come, Radiant Dawn...
<i>(O Rex Gentium)</i>	Come, King of all Nations...
<i>(O Emmanuel)</i>	Come, Emmanuel...

Thus the penitential theme or spirit was more evident during Advent until recent times. Namely,

- A tradition of fasting continued until the Code of Canon Law of 1917-1918.
- Musical instruments were discouraged during Mass
- The colour of *purple* was used in vestments and decorations as well.
- ‘*Gloria*’ was dropped from the Mass; and ‘*Alleluia*’ is retained.
- ‘*Weddings*’ were forbidden. Now they are however permitted on condition that the spirit of the Season is maintained.
- With some modifications, these traditions continue even today without serious penitential spirit (GD 48).

7. ADVENT: ITS LITURGICAL DIMENSION

The somber themes that colour the first Sundays of Advent continue with the same spirit of the immediately preceding Sundays, namely waiting

for the Second coming of the Lord. On these Sundays there is an emphasis on the end-times and the consummation of all history. The First Sunday of Advent continues this emphasis. On the Second and Third Sundays of Advent, John the Baptist, the Advent prophet, calls for penance. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the incarnational theme finally begins to unfold with the account of Annunciation.²⁹

Advent makes its appearance at Rome only in the second half of the sixth century in the sacramentaries and lectionaries which have preserved its liturgical formularies. It is important to note that at Rome the Advent was from the outset a liturgical institution, whereas everywhere else it had an ascetical consideration as its point of departure. Only with some difficulty, however, did the formularies for six and then four weeks of preparation for Christmas find their place in the annual cycle: in the old *Gelasian Sacramentary* the *Orationes de Adventu Domini* ("Prayers for the Coming of the Lord") are found after the Common of the Saints, at the end of Book II which bears the title *De nataliciis sanctorum* ("For the Anniversaries of the Saints"). It is also at the end of the sanctoral that the Gregorian Sacramentary places the *Orationes de Adventu*, and the lectionary of Alcuin the readings for the days *ante natale Domini*. Not until the graduals and antiphonaries of the eighth and ninth centuries do we find the Masses for Advent placed at the beginning of the cycle.

7.1. In the Eucharist

- The four weeks of Advent are in *two stages*: the first runs from December 1 to December 16; the second runs from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth and is more directly oriented to the Christmas feast.
- In the Missal each day has its own *opening prayer*, taken from the old sacramentaries.
- There are *two prefaces*; and each one sums up one of the stages. The first preface recalls the two comings of Christ. The second one celebrates him 'whose future coming was foretold by all the prophets;

whom the virgin mother bore in her womb; and who was made known by John the Baptist, his herald.'

- The Sunday *first reading* throughout the three-year cycle presents the principal messianic prophecies; the oracles of Isaiah and the additions made to these in the period of the Exile, and the oracles of Baruch and Zephaniah. Of all these prophecies the most important are the ones read on the fourth Sunday. They foretell that a woman will give birth to a descendant of David and that this child will be Emmanuel, "God with us" (Isaiah, Micah, Nathan).
- The Sunday gospels for each year focus on the same theme. The first Sunday is one that looks forward to the coming of the Lord; Jesus tells us, "Watch!" The second and third Sunday are Sundays of John the Baptist. The fourth is given over to the annunciation to Mary (A), the annunciation to Joseph (B), and the Visitation (C).
- The *second readings* from the Apostle show how the prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus. They in turn point forward to the coming of the Lord, which will be a day of salvation for all peoples and a day of joy for those who have awaited his coming with love.
- The *prayers*: Two themes - the celebration of the Lord's coming in the flesh, and his return in glory - are intermingled in the prayers. The opening prayer of the *first Monday* says: "Lord our God, help us to prepare for the coming of Christ your Son. May he find us waiting, eager in joyful prayer." Throughout the final week frequent mention is made of the Virgin Mary. Thus the opening prayer for *December 19* says: "Father, you show the world the splendor of your glory in the coming of Christ, born of the Virgin." On the fourth Sunday, which is one of annunciations (gospel), the prayer over the gifts asks: "Lord, may the power of Spirit, which sanctified Mary, the mother of your Son, make holy the gifts which we place upon this altar."

7.2. In the Liturgy of the Hours

- The Liturgy of the Hours contains not only its own proper antiphons but a collection of patristic passages that provide a fine introduction to the spirituality of Advent.
- In the biblical reading *Isaiah* has a dominant place and his prophecies are prolonged, both in the annual cycle and in the two-year cycle, by passages from the Book of the Consolation of Israel.
- Although the East did not celebrate Advent, the compilers of the new liturgy have drawn extensively on the *Greek Fathers* for the patristic passages in the Office of Readings. Nonetheless the Western Fathers are the main contributors, from St. Cyprian, to St. John of the Cross. As is only fitting, the classical texts are used, such as St. Irenaeus' parallel between Eve and Mary and St. Bernard's commentary on *Missus est* ("The angel Gabriel was sent"). The readings are followed by traditional responsories, as for example, is the responsory *Aspiciens a longe* ("Watching from afar"), on the first Sunday the dramatic structure of which was pointed out by P. Batiffol years ago.
- Pride of place among the antiphons belongs to the "*Great O Antiphons*" for the Magnificat from December 17 to December 23. These antiphons, which the Roman Church was singing as long ago as the time of Charlemagne, not only synthesize the *messianism* of the Old Testament in its purest form. Using ancient biblical images, they also present the divine titles of the incarnate Word, while their *Veni* ("Come!") is freighted with all the present hopes of the Church. In them the Advent liturgy reaches its culmination.

7.3. The Annunciation of the Lord

- The Annunciation of the Lord is celebrated twice: once in Advent and once on March 25.

- *The Annunciation in Advent*: The Western liturgies all celebrate the Annunciation of the Lord during Advent. In 656 a Council of Toledo decided to attach this feast to December 18, “as is customary.” The *Ambrosian liturgy* celebrated it on the last Sunday of Advent. Until 1970, the gospel *Missus est* was read in the Roman liturgy on Ember Wednesday in December, while the gospel of the Visitation was read on Friday. Now, however, the annunciation is the subject of the fourth Sunday, as it is at Milan, and of the readings of December 18, 20, and 21, as well as of several prayers in the last days before Christmas.
- *The Solemnity of March 25*: The Solemnity of the Annunciation on March 25 made its appearance at Rome in the second half of the seventh century under the title of *Annunciatio Domini* (“Annunciation of the Lord”). Marian devotion would subsequently change the title of *Annuntiatio beatae Mariae Virginis* (“Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary”), until the feast regained its original name in 1969. Although by Byzantine tradition admits of no feast during Lent, except on Saturdays, the Trullan Synod (692) mad an exception for the Annunciation, which is commemorated even if it occurs during the Easter *triduum*.

8. Significance of Advent

- It signifies that the Lord comes.
- It involves two types of waiting with expectation. It teaches patience, for impatience only ruins our life.
- It is a time of preparation for both the First and Second coming of the Lord.
- The spirit of Advent is one of hope, a hope based on the promises of God who comes to heal, to forget and to recreate us.
- It is a time of Grace and Blessing.

- It is a time to shun the path of dishonesty.
- It is a time to read the 'signs of the time' and to change one's life.
- Advent has a *gaudete* ('rejoice') Sunday (the third Sunday) which is paralleled by the *gaudete* Sunday of Lent.
- Advent never ends, till we hear the telling us "Enter into my joy."³⁰

9. OTHER CONNECTED TRADITIONS

Some religious traditions are directly associated with the theme of the season of Advent. They manifest a spirit of expectation.

9.1. Advent Wreath

It is probably the most popular tradition today. It stands for the lighting of candles on an Advent Wreath in both the churches and houses. This custom originated in the 16th century among the Lutherans in Germany and became quickly popular in other areas. It is probably the Christianization of a practice from the pre-Christian era. There had always been a festival of burning special lights and fire at the end of November and the beginning of December in Germanic lands as the darkness of winter becomes more severe. In the 1500s, it took on a distinct Christian symbolism as the Advent wreath first among Lutherans in eastern Germany and then among all German Protestants and Catholics. This tradition came with the German immigrants and was popularized among the Catholics in mid-1900s.³¹

The Advent Wreath can be of any size. It is made of ever-greens and is placed on a table or suspended from the ceiling. There are four candles in it, indicating the four weeks of Advent. The colour of the candles is not important because the symbolism is primarily in the flame. However, while three of the candles are usually in violet or purple colour, the traditional colour of Advent, the fourth one is in rose colour, representing the Third Sunday of Advent, originally called *Gaudete* (*Rejoice*) Sunday from the first word of the entrance antiphon for Mass. After the blessing of the Wreath on the First Sunday of Advent, the first candle is lit. The lighting ceremony is

repeated on each of the following Sundays. Thus slowly the light increases and darkness is dispelled more and more.³²

Wreaths have also been symbols of glory and victory. It also indicates the tension between darkness and light. It signifies that the spiritual darkness of the people is dispelled by the birth of the Messiah, the Light of the world.

9.2. Jesse Tree

In this tree of Advent tradition, the biblical persons associated with the gradual coming of the Messiah are represented. It is called Jesse Tree, named after the father of David. As the days roll by symbols are gradually added to it or to its branches. They could be drawings, cut-outs, found or purchased. They represent the ancestors of Jesse, either in faith or bloodline, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesse, David, Solomon, Joseph and Mary.³³

9.3. Advent House

Known as Advent or Christmas House, it is a popular variation of the Jesse Tree. It is usually bought from a religious shop. During the course of Advent, one of the many doors is opened on each day to display still another feature of the coming of Jesus. On December 24, the door of the House is opened to make visible the Nativity scene.³⁴

9.4. Manger

The Advent spirit of conversion has given rise to this practice of children preparing the Manger for the Nativity scene. Each night, the children are invited to place in the manger one straw for each good deed done during that day³⁵ (GD 50).

9.5. Advent Colours

Violet or purple is the traditional colour of Advent. It symbolizes a penitential spirit and is associated with this season. Liturgists and Church leaders try to clarify the theme of Advent by indicating that it is not a "little lent." Some liturgists have suggested a dark blue colour. This (Marian) colour

seems also to be useful in indicating the role of Mary in the mystery of Christmas event.

The tradition of using rose-coloured vestment on the Third Sunday of Advent both anticipates and symbolizes the Christmas joy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- DUES, Grec, *Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Populer Guide*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, U.S.A., 8th Ed., 1992.
- MARTIMORT, A.G. (Ed.), *The Church at Prayer: The Liturgy and Time*, Vol. IV, New Edition, Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, Collegeville, Minnesota, U.S.A., 1985.
- MCBRIEN, Richard P, "Advent," *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Harper Collins, New York, 1989, pp. 17-18.
- PUTHIADAM, Ignatius, *Christian Liturgy: The Re-presentation of the Greatest God-Human Story*, St. Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2003.
- TALLEY, Thomas J, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, PUEBLO, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1991.

Footnotes

- ¹ A.G. MARTIMORT, (Ed.), *The Church at Prayer: The Liturgy and Time*, Vol. IV, 91.
- ² I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy: The Re-presentation of the Greatest God-Human Story*, 38. (This will be known in future as I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*.)
- ³ *Ibid.*, 37-38.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-41.
- ⁵ T.J. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 80.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.
- ⁷ T.J. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 87.
- ⁸ I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 41.

- 9 I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 32.
- 10 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Populer Guide*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, U.S.A., 8th Ed., 1992, 45.
- 11 A.G. MARTIMORT, (Ed.), *The Church at Prayer*, 91.
- 12 I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 33.
- 13 I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 38-39.
- 14 R.P. MCBRIEN, "Advent," *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Harper Collins, New York, 1989, pp.18.
- 15 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Populer Guide*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, U.S.A., 8th Ed., 1992, 47.
- 16 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions: A Populer Guide*, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, U.S.A., 8th Ed., 1992, 48.
- 17 I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 34.
- 18 I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 33.
- 19 A.G. MARTIMORT, (Ed.), *The Church at Prayer*, 93.
- 20 T.J. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 79.
- 21 T.J. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 79-80.
- 22 T.J. TALLEY, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 84.
- 23 A.G. MARTIMORT, (Ed.), *The Church at Prayer*, 92-93.
- 24 A.G. MARTIMORT, (Ed.), *The Church at Prayer*, 93.
- 25 I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 32 & 34.
- 26 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 46-47.
- 27 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 47.
- 28 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 46.
- 29 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 48.
- 30 I. PUTHIADAM, *Christian Liturgy*, 35-36.
- 31 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 48-49.
- 32 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 49.
- 33 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 49.
- 34 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 49.
- 35 G. DUES, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 50.