During the Advent season you will notice something that make this season unique. You may have noticed it other years. Can you guess what it is? It's an advent wreath, traditionally they are made of evergreen branches, a type of pine tree, and four candles are put around it. In church you might also notice Christmas decorations like a nativity scene. However during the Advent season the wreath is of great significance because it shows the contrast of the light of Christ overcoming the darkness of sin. The circular shape of the wreath symbolizes God's complete and unending love for us, His children. So great was His love for us that He sent His only Son to redeem us from sin. The wreath without beginning or end also represents eternal life that comes from following Jesus.

The Advent season represents the time humanity waited, approximately 4,000 years, for the birth of the Savior foretold in the Old Testament. Advent is four weeks long which is why it has four candles, three purple and one pink. Each candle represents 1,000 years and each is lit at the beginning of the week. Each week of Advent a candle is lit, the light of each one represents the light of Christ coming into the world. When all of them are lit we know that we are closer to receiving Jesus in our hearts on Christmas Day. This is a time of hope, peace, love, and joy. A time for us to prepare, be in anticipation and wait to celebrate the birth of our savior.

Although it is a time of joy we should also take the time to quiet and discipline our hearts for the full joy of Christmas. We will say a prayer at the beginning of each week of Advent to prepare ourselves for Christmas. As missionary disciples we should bring the presence of God to others. It is important to prepare ourselves to receive the joy of Christmas so that we may be able to share it with others. (www.catholiccompany.com/getfed/the-advent-wreath-tradition-meaning/)

(If possible please get an advent wreath for your classroom. Because of the Christmas holidays you might want to send the prayers for the advent wreath home and encourage your students to pray the prayers with their families at home.)

**Blessing of the Advent Wreath**

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.  
**Leader:** Our help is in the name of the Lord  
**All:** Who made heaven and earth.

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 9: 1-2, 5-6  
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest, as they exult when dividing the spoils. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulders dominion rest. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, upon David’s throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of host will do this! The word of the Lord.  
**All:** Thanks be to God.

**Have all the students join hands and read the following:** Lord our God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, he is the savior of every nation. Lord, God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ’s promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
**All:** Amen

**Song:** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (Sing a verse of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel or play a recording of the song)  
O come, desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease  
And be Thyself our King of peace

[Refrain]  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel
Prayer Service
Advent
All Grades

First Week of Advent: December 3, 2017

Today we light the first candle of the advent wreath. The light of this candle represents the watchful waiting and hope that we have as we begin this time of preparation and waiting. Our prayer today speaks of our journey through life as we run to meet Christ. Gathering at his right hand every time we journey to his encounter with Christ not only in the Eucharist but also with the least of our brothers and sisters. Our humble service to others in their needs opens the path to being closer to God.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Light the first candle of the advent wreath)

Second Week of Advent: December 10, 2017

As we begin the second week of Advent we light the second candle on our wreath. This Sunday’s Gospel reminds us to prepare the way of the Lord like John the Baptist. We are reminded that we have to prepare our hearts and our communities to rejoice in the birth of our Savior in our hearts and homes. Through our faith journey we are called to change, to conversion, to better understand what God is asking of us.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Light the two candles of the advent wreath)

As we light these candles for this second Sunday of Advent, We give thanks for the Child whom we celebrate this Advent Season. We also give thanks for all those who help us prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ. Lord our God, help us to be ready for Your coming, by making good choices, and turning away from bad ones.

Create in us clean hearts, so we may welcome and care for all Your children, in the name of Your Son, Jesus, Savior of our world. Amen

Third Week of Advent: December 17, 2017

This week we light the pink or rose candle. It reminds us of Mary, who was always caring and of service to others. While expecting her son, Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was also pregnant. Her actions reflect a spirit of service to others and generosity. Without thinking of herself and that she should be the one getting the help because after all she was the mother of the Son of God. She goes and helps her cousin who greets her with joy and with jubilee, for her child jumped of joy when he felt her presence near.

The third Sunday of Advent was formerly called “gaudete”, it is Latin for rejoice. As Christmas is getting closer let us also rejoice and spread the joy of the birth of our savior by caring and being of service to each other.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Light the three candles of the advent wreath)

As we light these candles for this third Sunday of Advent, let us give thanks for the Child whom we celebrate this Advent Season. Let us also be reminded of our baptismal call to care for others. All loving and powerful God, we shout for joy for the gladness You have placed within our hearts. As we continue to celebrate, remind us that we await a mighty Savior, an Infant Child Who will bring gladness to all. We will walk with You today, Lord, with confidence in the promise of Your love. We will show Your kindness to all people, especially those who have yet to know the goodness of Your Son. We pray this in the name of the Christ Child. Amen.

Fourth Week of Advent: December 24, 2017

As we light the last candle on the advent wreath we are reminded that the presence of God is among us. That we are called to welcome him in our homes, our communities and most importantly in our hearts. We have been preparing and waiting for the birth of our savior. With all of the candles lit the light that glows from the wreath is brighter and our anticipation, hope, and joy grows stronger.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Light all the candles of the advent wreath)

As we light these candles, let us give thanks for the Child Whom we celebrate this Advent Season. We thank you for the gift of Mary, our example of what it means to be pleasing to you. All-powerful God, we wait in anticipation of the arrival of Your Son as an infant child. In Mary’s “yes,” your Word took flesh on earth. In these last days of Advent, help us to be strong in our prayer. Help us to be kind and gentle with one another and with those we meet. Help us to continue to extend our love and prayers to our brothers and sisters in the Missions, in this Advent Season and throughout the coming New Year. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.