

The Advent Wreath

On this Third Sunday of Advent, when we light the pink candle on the Advent Wreath, we ask not only *Why a pink candle?*, but what and why the Advent Wreath itself? One of the things that characterizes our Catholic Church is what is called the *sacramental principle*. This refers to how our way of praying sees in all created things symbols and expressions of God their Creator, which thus can be helpful for experiencing and expressing our relationship with God. The Advent Wreath uses several such created things in this “sacramental” way. The circle symbolizes the eternal cycle of the seasons, and the evergreens symbolize the persistence of life in the midst of winter when all other vegetation has turned brown. Placing these two symbols together speaks of the eternal life that is ours in Christ, which overcomes even death itself. The fire of the candles is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the presence of God with us in Jesus Christ. The progressive lighting of the candles over the four Sundays of the season are expressive of the coming – the advent - of Christ in our lives, and our anticipation of our celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas. The color violet used throughout Advent expresses the season’s theme of preparation, while the lighter pink candle lit on this Third Sunday reflects the joyful mood we feel as Christmas draws closer and closer. In connection with this lighter spirit the Third Sunday of Advent is called by the Latin name *Gaudete* Sunday, which means *Rejoice!* in English.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.