

***THE ADVENT (Nativity Fast) WREATH***  
*(in the vestibule of the church)*

Just as each family has its own special way of preparing for and remembering the Great Feast of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas), the Church has a special way of preparing for and remembering every major feast that is celebrated during the Church Year. Unfortunately, and for many reasons, the richness and joy of this church tradition has been lost, or, it has been left to survive primarily in monasteries and the few churches where the services which lead up to and follow each feast are still celebrated. What is regrettable about this loss is that the verses and scriptural readings for these days of the pre-feast and post-feast give us a better understanding of the meaning of the feasts themselves and deepen the joy of our celebration.

The lighting of the Advent Wreath candles each week prior to the Feast of the Nativity is a tradition that originated in Germany, but has been adopted by families of all Christian backgrounds throughout the world. The traditional Advent Wreath with four candles has been adapted for Orthodox use by adding two more candles for the six weeks of the Nativity Fast.

***Pre-Nativity Kontakion***

**Today the Virgin cometh unto the cave,  
To give birth to the Word who was born before all ages;  
Begotten in a manner that defies description.  
Rejoice, therefore, O Universe if thou should hear,  
And glorify with the Angels and the shepherds:  
Glorify Him who by His will shall become a newborn  
babe  
And who is our God before all ages.**

***First Sunday of Advent***

*Everyone says together:*

**Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!**

*The Priest says:*

Christ is the Light whose rays shine to the ends of the earth. He commanded you, O Holy Apostle Matthew, to proclaim His Word. He made you worthy to write His Holy Gospel. Pray that He may enlighten and save our souls.

*With the lighting of the first candle, we all say together:*

**O Lord, we will walk in the light of Thy countenance,  
and will exult in Thy Name forever.**

---