

## The First Sunday of Advent 2003 is November 30

Dear WWME family,

Growing up, my (Karen) family did not celebrate Advent as such. Oh, from time to time there were advent calendars and red and green paper chains constructed. The word "Advent" was heard mainly from the pulpit. It was not part of the family vocabulary. There were quiet whisperings of the making of homemade gifts and the hiding of purchased gifts. But our waiting and our spiritual preparation for the Christ Child seemed to be haphazard at best.

For me, (Jack) being raised by a Catholic mother and a Jewish father, Advent was a term only heard at mass on Sunday or in religious education classes. Our family did not celebrate Advent.

In pre-Christian days, the Advent wreath was one of the more popular traditions. People gathered to celebrate the return of the sun after the winter solstice. For Christians, the lighting of the Advent candles represents the promise of the coming of Jesus, the light of the world.

We started our family tradition when the children were young with very simple reflections. Once they reached the age of handling matches, the squabbles about which child would light the candles, diverted the focus of the Advent wreath. As the years passed, the teen years found us with whining about, "How long will this take" and attempts to bolt for the ringing phone that interrupted our special family time. Our attempts to make this season meaningful for our children seemed to leave much to be desired. But, we hope the family time and gathered knowledge about our faith will remain a positive memory for our children.

Some years we added our Advent readings into the time set aside for the verbal portion of our daily 10/10. These are some of our more memorable and meaningful seasons. These are the years when we searched our souls for how we, as a couple, were preparing ourselves for the celebration of Jesus' birth. It is sad to say, that we have not always put that same effort into our Advent practice. Some years, the wreath form was not unpacked and the evergreen boughs from our yard stayed on the tree. The purple candles that reminded us to turn our hearts toward God were not displayed as we kept busy with less spiritual activities. Too often Advent escaped without attention to our spiritual preparation for Christmas.

This year, we are promising to be more "together" and to take time to reflect and to pray. We plan to unpack the advent wreath, dust it off and adorn it simply and return to a theme to focus our Advent prayers. Our theme for reflection will be how we, as a couple, can be an instrument of God's peace. How we can be peacemakers in our couple relationship, in our family, and beyond! We pray the lighting of the candles on our wreath will help light our way to a fuller desire for Christ's peace in our hearts and peace in the world.

There are many beautiful ways to celebrate Advent. You might consider decorating and discussing the Jesse Tree. You can hold celebrations for the many feasts of saints during Advent. Invite families to participate in a Posada. Perform service projects. We have participated in, or sponsored each of these at one time or another.

Please join us in preparing your hearts for Jesus this Advent. There are many resources in your church, religious bookstores and on the Internet to help you decide what you would like to do as a couple or as a family. The Worldwide Marriage Encounter calendar has questions for dialogue to prepare you for the joyous season of Christ's birth. If your daily dialogue is out of step, Advent could be the time to get back in step or to add some sparkle into your daily 10/10.

Please share with us and the eMatrimony readers how you as a couple, or you as a family, are celebrating Advent. Share with us how your dialogue has become richer or, some other meaningful experience about Advent. Send your reflections to [editors@em matrimony.org](mailto:editors@em matrimony.org)

Love & Prayers,  
Jack ♥ Karen Baker  
Ematrimony Editors

Dialogue Questions:

- As a couple, how would I like us to celebrate or observe Advent? WAMFAT?
- What has been meaningful to me spiritually in preparing for Christmas? HDIFSTWY?
- How can I help you, my spouse, spiritually during Advent? HDIFAT?
- How can we help our children prepare for Christmas during Advent? HDIFAT?