

The Seasons of the Church

Advent

The earliest reference to Advent in the Western Church appears in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*¹ a Merovingian document of the mid-8th century, falsely attributed to Pope Gelasius (d. 496.) It is the second oldest western liturgical book that has survived. It was acquired from Queen Christina of Sweden (R) who died in Rome and was buried in the crypt of St. Peter's Basilica. In her honor it is named MS Reginensis 316 and can be found in the Vatican Library.



Rose (for joy) vestments are worn on Gaudete Sunday, the 3rd Sunday of Advent following the Introit of that day: Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico gaudete. (Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice.) Phil. 4:4

Advent is the beginning of the Liturgical year. It begins the first Sunday closest to St. Andrew's Day (30 Nov.) It is a penitential season, and some people still keep abstinence on a few of the days. Sundays in Advent are liturgically first class, which means that they have precedence over all other observances.² As a penitential time intended to prepare us for the glorious Feast of Christmas, violet/purple vestments are worn on the first, second and fourth Sundays and other days. The Gloria is omitted but Alleluia may be said. The organ is to be silent on purple days.³

The Advent Wreath is a nonliturgical custom designed by Johann Hinrich Wichern in 1839 at a home for poor children in Hamburg, Germany. He placed 19 small red candles and four large white ones on a cartwheel. The custom did not spread



beyond Germany until the 1930s.

1 A Sacramentary is a liturgical book that preceded the Missal.

2 By a special rule, if the feast of the Conception of the Virgin Mary falls on the 2nd Sunday of Advent takes precedence over the Sunday. 3. E.C.R. Lamburn, *Ritual Notes*, 196