

1st Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

Two popular Advent traditions use items to mark the passage of time. The Advent wreath marks the four weeks of the season with a candle for each week before Christmas. The Advent calendar counts down the days to Christmas by opening a small window on each date to reveal an element of the Christmas story or even a small gift. Both the wreath and the calendar are used as a way to pause for a few minutes of peace and quiet prayer each day.

Marking time with prayer, scripture, and a brief ritual is not unusual for Christians. In fact, there is something called the Liturgy of the Hours, which contains psalms and seasonal prayers to be said throughout the day. Originally only used by priests, monks, and nuns, there are many versions available now that anyone can use. Some versions have even been simplified just to include morning and evening prayer.

Waiting and patience are strong themes during Advent. Both have to do with our experience of the passage of time. In Advent Liturgy, we hear about Israel's long wait for the Messiah and the early Christian's impatience for the coming of Christ in glory. The scriptures tell about how our ancestors in faith were often anxious about how and when God would enter their lives and save them. We probably share some of that anxiety with them. On any given day, we still wait for things to change and improve with God's help added to our own work and efforts.

Today's Gospel describes Christ's return in glory as coming like a man returning home after a long trip without an estimated time of arrival. It is meant to emphasize that it will be a surprise. Each household member has work to do and should continue to do it every day. What is said about Christ in the end time is actually true about every time He enters our lives. It is always a blessed surprise. So, He urges us to be watchful and alert. We can be watchful and alert for His coming to us in scripture, in Eucharist, in prayer, in generosity to people, and in quiet time, all experiences where Christ has been known to enter. As we wait for Christ's surprising arrivals throughout our lives, Advent encourages us to appreciate the need for patience in every aspect of our lives. Since patience is not so much the ability to wait but the ability to keep a good attitude and a peaceful spirit while we wait, the season of Advent can help us to have both.

Fr. Valentine

Scripture Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/112920.cfm>