

Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.



Impact this month

Spiritual Waiting

- Bring out the Christmas decorations gradually, and keep an Advent space throughout the season. Pause there for prayer daily.
- Read and reflect on the Sunday readings or use an Advent daily devotional. Think of how the people of Israel waited for generations for the coming of the Messiah. How do you long for God's presence and grace in your life?
- When the bustle of preparations for Christmas become too much, recall the blessing of the people who will receive the gifts you will give or eat the meals you are preparing. How are your activities a response to the gift of these relationships in your life?

Wait for it

Wait for it... we use the phrase lightheartedly at times and seriously in others. There are some things that are simply worth waiting for.

"I can't wait!" Waiting isn't easy, especially in our on-demand, quick-fix world. We're expected to have immediate answers at work, and can choose from hundreds of entertainment options for instant enjoyment on TV or the web. Waiting requires patience, and often leaves us feeling a little uncomfortable. When we wait, we focus on what we are anticipating, — a new opportunity, resolution to a dilemma, a child, longed-for time with family or friends.

What are you waiting for? During Advent, we wait "in blessed hope" for Christ's second coming, and for the arrival of Christmas in which we celebrate Christ's "advent" — Jesus' coming as a child in Bethlehem. The season of Advent intensifies our anticipation of Christmas and our appreciation for the mystery of God's love for us.

The waiting we do during Advent is good for us, practically and spiritually. Our Advent waiting helps us to stay focused on the "reason for the season," as we take to heart the truth that God is with us, throughout the days and years of our lives. As we wait in this season, we become more sensitive to those who wait for food, clothing, employment, friendship, compassion. Advent is a time for us to reach out to them, to make Christ's love known through our actions and sharing.

Especially when so much of our surrounding culture is already marking the "Christmas season," it is not easy to wait patiently for all that Christmas brings — the special gatherings, meals, and gift-giving. Yet, wait we must. Keeping Advent transforms our practical waiting into something much more. Our hearts will be ready to more fully take in all that we celebrate at Christmas.

Advent reminds us that some things are simply worth waiting for.



Prepare the way

“Recalculating!” “A new route has been found that will save you time. Would you like to take it?”

In the era of online maps and GPS, we are rarely without directions for a trip, whether to an unfamiliar neighborhood in our own city or to a distant location. Not only do we have a sense of how long it will take to arrive at our destination, we are notified when we have missed a turn or when a slight change in course may save us time in traffic. If it were only so simple in our spiritual lives! What a difference it might mean for us if we could plug in our desired destination (a deeper relationship with God) and receive immediate directions for the journey. In many ways, we do have such instructions, especially in this season of Advent:

PRAYER IS OUR ON-RAMP

Often, the busier we get, the less time we are inclined to spend in prayer. Yet, our busiest times are exactly when we need to pray the most! Centering our lives with prayer insures that we are on the path God desires.

TAKE THE ROUTE OF GRATITUDE

In this season in which so much attention is focused on the gifts we will give others, take time to reflect on the many gifts God has given you. Growing in gratitude for your life, relationships with family and friends, your talents and strengths, and financial resources will help you to recognize God’s grace within and around you, even in the busiest of moments.

CARING AND SHARING IS THE WAY

Our parishes and local communities have many opportunities to reach out to those in need in this season. Plan to share your time and talent in service and your financial and material resources, not only now but in the year to come. Jesus’ way is the way of sharing and caring.

This Advent, choose the best “yes”

by Amberly Boerschinger

When faced with various choices throughout the Advent season, consider the BEST yes.

*If you are tempted to celebrate with a handful of chocolate candies, consider saving the sweet treat for grandma's coffee cake or mom's sweet rolls. This is an easy way to help us wait and also to make the celebration of faith and family



that much more special. *Many Hispanic Catholics celebrate the tradition of Las Posadas,

processions and re-enactments of Mary and Joseph's census pilgrimage and their search and "wait" for a place to stay in Bethlehem. Perhaps instead of a progressive dinner or party often hosted before Christmas in many

neighborhoods, invite an Hispanic friend or parishioner to share something in this tradition with you.

*Some cultures save opening of gifts for the Feast of Epiphany to commemorate the gifts of the three kings. This waiting allows us to focus on the spiritual gift of Jesus on Christmas Day. If you can't save all the gifts, maybe consider saving one special gift!

*If the Advent wreath, countdown calendar, Jesse

Tree or paper chain just isn't inspiring you, consider these four words as you move through December - Wait. Watch. Wonder. Welcome. There is no rush or goal in any of these words. Let yourself find purpose in their meaning, and peace in their simplicity.

*Remember, our destination is not Christmas Day, but to a welcoming of the Christ child, the Body of Christ, and a spirit of constant hospitality and generosity.