

What is Advent for You?

The word “Advent” means to be at the beginning of something. Unfortunately, we human beings are creatures of habit, and our celebration and understanding of Christmas often falls victim to our habits. Families tend to celebrate in the same way year after year, and woe to any family member who suggests we do something a little different this year!

For most of us, then, Advent is not usually the beginning of something new, instead, it is the repetition of something old. To a degree, the same old ways of doing things stir memories and bring comfort, but the same old ways of doing things can also prevent growth.

The coming of Advent, year after year, must also be more than a routine. Advent, however, is not Christmas, and we must be careful not to turn our four weeks of Advent into a long celebration of Christmas. If an “advent” is to be the beginning of something, then what exactly is beginning? This is our four week question! The Gospels tell us to be watchful, because there is something new for us to see, and if we are not careful, we will miss it.

Advent is a time for us to remind ourselves of the ‘promise’. Something new was begun 2000 years ago, and we have a role in it. But life does distract us, as it distracted the people of old. We begin to fall into our routines and thus we begin to exclude any growth especially our growth in the Lord. We are warned not to let this happen. We are to be an “Advent people” always vigilant, always watchful.

So can we do something different during Advent this year in order to help ourselves see Christmas and its promised vision in a new way? How can we make Advent a beginning and not a repetition of something old? Our first step is to make sure we see Christmas as a SPIRITUAL CELEBRATION. We must separate it from the tinsel and the wrapping paper and the shopping and all the fuss. I know this can be a difficult thing with all the commercialism around us. But what might we surrender from the past to accomplish this? How might we emphasize that Christmas is a spiritual celebration? How might we bring the theme of ‘mercy’ into our preparations as a follow up from the Year of Mercy?

Daily family prayer may be an answer. The making and lighting of an Advent Wreath at home to accompany our prayer. The purchase of fewer gifts or less expensive items that will not tax our budgets.

Will this be the first year, in a long time, that we used the confessional or attend a reconciliation service? In this way we really can throw off the old ways that separate us from God and from one another, and find new ways to unite us in our relationships, especially through forgiveness and mercy.

Will this be the Advent we talk more about Jesus and maybe a little less about Santa and shopping in our homes?

Will this be the year that we become more concerned about time with our family and less concerned about time at work or other activities that separate us from our family unit?

Is this the year that maybe we will reach out in a special way to the poor or participate in an action of social justice to help bring change to our world? And maybe we can make this an example for our children or grandchildren in what generosity and sharing really mean.

Is this the Advent where our faith changes our behaviour and where we try and put our faith in Christ and our support of our Church community as a priority in our everyday lives?

Will this be the Advent that we at last pay attention to Advent, and all that this season of preparation offers us through our Church?
The choice is ours! The question is - What will your Advent be like?