

## A fruitful Advent makes for a wonderful Christmas

It is said that a good beginning leads to a good outcome. Then a true Advent observance is a great step toward a wonderful Christmas. And a good Advent can also bring you spiritual renewal along the way.

Waiting can often produce greater joy when the wait is finally over. Why not consider adopting one or two of these ideas to increase your Christmas joy through a fruitful Advent wait?

### Pray the Wait.

- **Commit random acts of prayer.** Pray while you wait in line. Pray in the car. Pray when you're put on hold. Pray on your way to work. Keep your prayer simple and heartfelt.
- **Wait in his presence.** Make a visit to the tabernacle in your church to the Body of Christ. Spending time in reverent prayer before the Eucharist will bring healing and peace.
- **Ask God's advice for how much to spend on Christmas gifts.** It is hard to fully prepare for the Savior when you are racking up debt. Celebrate joyfully, simply, and responsibly.
- **Make a joyful noise.** St. Augustine is credited with saying that singing is praying twice. Hum along with the carols in the elevator. Sing hymns joyfully at Mass. Listen to Handel's Messiah or other sacred music of the season. Use song to boost your prayer - even if it's just singing in the shower.
- **Before you speak or act, pray that you will bear God's image in all that you say or do.** In this way, we won't be strangers, but rather will be ready and waiting to welcome him.
- **"Hail Mary" your way through Advent.** Consider the Blessed Mother's example of faith. Learn to see through her eyes, listen with her ears, and trust with her heart.



### Anticipate with hope.

- **This is a good time to make peace with one another, and be forgiving.** Jesus said, "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 25:23-25).
- **Open your heart.** December is the loneliest month of the year. Make a list of people you know who live alone, are new to your area, or who have lost a loved one this year. Include them in your family events, invite them to Mass, or pay them a visit.
- **Champion a service project.** Many parishes gather gifts for disadvantaged families or folks forgotten in nursing homes. Find out what your local community is doing or begin your own service traditions.
- **Become a soldier in the war for peace.** Avoid quarreling or gossip, and work for a spirit of unity.
- **Convert your heart.** Do a thorough examination of your conscience so that you can recognize patterns of sin that need to be changed. If you need help spotting them, ask your priest for advice when you go to Confession. (Hint: if you think you don't have any sins, read Exodus 20 and Matthew 5.)
- **Mark the season.** You may not be able to wait until Christmas Eve to decorate your home, but why not decorate slowly throughout Advent to measure progress through the season?
- **Advertise your faith in Jesus' birth.** Put on a joyful appearance, no matter what is going on in your day. Remind yourself of the coming miracle and what it means for each of us.

However you choose to observe Advent, remember the gifts of the first Christmas -- justice, peace, and freedom. They are God's Christmas gifts to us all.