

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

2nd Sunday of Advent | For Sunday, December 6, 2020

## How Do You Prepare the Way?

*Written by Allison Gingras*

**Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11**

**2 Peter 3:8-14**

**Mark 1:1-8**



Does our holiday to-do list reflect an understanding of Advent as a waiting and readying for Christ's second coming? Do people look at you and your life of faith as though you are clothed in camel hair and feeding on locust and honey? Would they recognize you as having been baptized in the Spirit? Does the glory of the Lord revealed by Christ and lived out by his disciples shine all about you?

Gratefully, the Lord does not delay in fulfilling his promises. Any delay comes from his mercy and gracious patience with us — not wishing any of us to be lost. St. Peter exhorts us to conduct ourselves in holiness and devotion, yet, if I am honest with myself, how often is this upheld beyond my hour of Mass each week? Even there, am I devoted to the mystery before me? Am I merely fulfilling an obligation, counting the minutes until I can be about my life?

According to His promises, we await a new heaven and a new earth. We should be eager to be found without blemish and at peace. Advent is God's gift to us, our time for preparation. Christmas is not merely a reminder and a celebration of Jesus' first coming as an infant to Mary in Bethlehem but a reminder that he will come again. It is our creed and what we believe. How we live is how we prepare and how we will be found when we meet Jesus face to face. Whether when he comes on the clouds in his glory and power, as prophesied in Mark's Gospel, or we've breathed our last on earth — meeting him in his kingdom beyond the veil.

Many make lists as part of their Christmas preparations — do you do the same to take stock of your spiritual life? Can you list all the ways you prepare your heart for the coming of Christ? At Christmas time, we think of others in terms of gifts and greetings, careful not to forget anyone, which reminds me of how patient God is with us not to have anyone left out of the joy of which awaits us.

Do we extend that care we take for friends and family to assure their Christmas happiness as we do and provide good gifts to help them enjoy eternal joy? Rejoice that our preparations do not include itchy fashion or bug delicacies; however, John the Baptist's message is no less urgent or essential. Prepare the way of the Lord to make straight the path. Be alert, ready, and open to a life of holiness and righteousness. Be a gift to your loved ones as you begin a steadfast hope this Advent season.

Celebrating with rejoicing is more crucial than ever; additionally, it is a posture of praise. When we acknowledge nothing can squelch the joy of the Lord, regardless of our circumstances, that is praise! Advent traditions offer a way to stay connected to the Church, each other, and the real reason for the season. Prayers offered together as a family (in person or on video chat), even via social media, bridge the distance and magnificently connect us beyond what the eyes can see.

Not discounting the place of family to fill our hearts with Christmas joy, we must never forget we are first and foremost a part of the family of God. Again, I ask, in which ways have we included heaven in our preparations? The Christmas tree adorns our living rooms, but what about the Jesse Tree and this beautiful look at salvation history, to which we are an integral part? The wreath is upon my door, but is there an Advent wreath on my dining room table, lit each evening to remind me who the light of the world is? I cross off the days 'till Christmas on my calendar, but do I also follow an Advent calendar, perhaps one with daily activities or Scripture readings to know my days are indeed numbered, but not unto death, but new life with Christ.

Finding ways to celebrate Advent, this time of waiting, with so much to be waiting for — can renew our strength and hope. Lighting the candles, decking the halls with a Jesse tree or Nativity, and offering antiphons of praise all remind us faith exists despite the world's circumstances or how we celebrate secularly.

Allison Gingras

## PRAYER

May the grace of the Advent season  
consume my heart as I prepare  
for the coming of the Lord.  
Let me not, especially this year,  
overlook the hope and joy  
which comes from fully embracing  
the traditions of a Catholic celebration  
of Advent and Christmas.