

Fr. Martin's Reflection – December 3, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Welcome to Advent, a time of preparation and reflection. Wonderful! It really depends on who is asking the question. If it's Fr. Martin then the preparation and reflection is all about Jesus, but if it's a work colleague – don't talk to me. I must get a new tree, new decorations, new lights and my brother just had a new baby, so that's another present. My sister moved into a new home, so I must host Christmas dinner this year – I know what I'm preparing for! For some of us the Advent period can develop into a nightmare – don't let it. You decide what you can do and just do it. Learn to say no to the endless demands of others and come and reflect with God.

Here are 6 suggestions for Advent, I hope they are helpful:

Read to feed your soul. . .

Be intentional about what you read this Advent and take a break from novels and biographies to concentrate on books that feed the soul.

- “**The Meaning Is in the Waiting**”, “**The Advent of Christ: Scripture Reflections to Prepare for Christmas**”, or “**Sacred Reading for Advent and Christmas 2023**”, by the Apostleship of Prayer, the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network.
- Sign on to more spiritual inspiration news feeds online like **Busted Halo**, **Praying Advent** website, or the blog post from the Rev. Dr James A. Kowalski.

Meditate on being patient. . .

This year focus more on the spiritual meaning of Advent, on the significance of waiting actively in anticipation of Christ's birth. There are many Advent meditation books available, including “**Waiting for Christmas**” by Fr. Richard Rohr or “**Watch for the Light**” by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others. You could also use a YouTube meditation like the one from Pope Francis. Follow a mini-study course like Stephen Cottrell's “**Do Nothing Christmas Is Coming**” or use **Busted Halo's Advent Surprise Calendar** with daily inspiration and challenges for a more spiritual Advent season.

Pray daily. . .

We all need God's help to slow down and wait with patience. Using the thoughts and ideas based on our prayers, ask for God's help to see how he is breaking into your life and pray for others who need his help and healing at this time of year.

Reach out to others. . .

While Advent is a time for inner reflection, focusing solely on ourselves tempts us to neglect our call to be good neighbours. St. James spoke very directly about how our faith must ultimately result in action: “Faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” Turning our inward Advent reflections into outward actions shows that God is truly working in our lives.

Plan with intention

With a little intention, we can learn to focus on God as we do all our necessary tasks by praying for the recipients of each gift we wrap or making a mental list of the things we're grateful for while standing in a long line.

Take Advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession. . .

Allow yourself to experience the love of God's forgiving grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession. There are additional times scheduled for confession prior to Christmas at both church sites: **Holy Assumption Church, Roebling—Thursday, December 14, from 7-8pm. St. Mary Church, Bordentown—Tuesday, December 19, from 7-8pm.**

Have a wonderful Advent.

Fr. Martin