

WHY ADVENT WAITING MATTERS: “WITH HOPEFUL EXPECTATION”

Have any of you ever saved up coupons or box tops to send in for a gift or prize? I still remember doing this as a child, and then waiting for my gift to arrive...**four to six weeks** for delivery. That is an eternity for an eight year old! I'd check the mail every day, and then finally it came— a giant, inflatable Oscar Meyer Weiner. I earned it, and it was all mine. The offer stipulated that if I collected so many box tops, I could redeem them for the prize. To redeem here means to turn in, to make an exchange. My **SA Rewards Card** is loaded with over 100,000 points, but I simply cannot bring myself to redeem it! Why? Because they instituted a level including 190,000 points, and the prize is even better, that's why! When will I learn that if we store up treasure for ourselves, we are missing the point? At least I am well versed in the art of waiting.

Advent is the liturgical season *par excellence* for waiting. According to the **General Norms for the Liturgical Year**, the season of Advent has a twofold character: it is a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; it is a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. It continues, “Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation.” [Norms # 39] There is precious little more than those few statements in the official liturgical norms of the Church. The **General Instruction of the Roman Missal** [GIRM] states: “During Advent the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.” We observe this, building slowly and only putting out the indoor crèche the Sunday before Christmas, and being careful about anticipating Christmas.

While Advent is not strictly speaking a penitential season, when you come to Mass you surely see violet (purple) vestments. Nor do we sing the Gloria on Sundays, but we **do sing the Alleluia**, unlike in Lent. What is going on here? Under the influence of Spain and France, the Romans began to incorporate some penitential aspects to Advent, including fasting, violet vestments, omitting the Gloria on Sunday, etc. The post-Vatican II liturgical reform stressed a clear difference between the two seasons, while retaining some aspects of penance. Penitential services are also recommended this time of year, as we prepare a place in our hearts for the Lord to dwell. But I admit that it is a bit of a juggling act, in which “strictly speaking” meets popular piety and custom. Personally, I value the Advent intersection between “devout and joyful expectation” with “waiting” and spiritual preparation. This also includes the praying of the “O Antiphons,” at Evening Prayer beginning December 17. They comprise the verses of my favorite Advent Hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

Another Vatican instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, states in # 121: “The purpose of using different colors is to express the specific character of the various mysteries. The use of the diverse colors is both pedagogical and symbolic of the various liturgical feasts and seasons.” The GIRM # 346d provides: The color violet or purple is used in Advent and Lent. So violet is *intentionally* used in Advent. Penitential services are also recommended this time of year, as we prepare a place in our hearts for the Lord to dwell. The GIRM further indicates that the Third Sunday of Advent has a special name— *Gaudete* Sunday. *Gaudete* is the Latin word for “Rejoice,” which is the first word of the introit of the Mass for this day. There are two noticeable differences this weekend. Oftentimes, you will see flowers on the altar for this Third Sunday. Additionally, **Rose-colored** vestments may be worn, where it is the practice, on *Gaudete* Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent) and on *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), according to the GIRM # 346f. Thanks to a generous donation, we have a new set of **Rose-colored** vestments debuting this year. N.B. **Rose** is **not** the same color as **Pink**! “Get it? Got it. Good!” Borrowing from Danny Kaye's hilarious tongue twisting 1956 comedy film “The Court Jester,” I repeat with every ounce of clarity I can muster. **Rose** is **not pink**— “Get it? Got it. Good!”

Advent customs are rich and somewhat varied from country to country. For example, Advent calendars mark sacred time, and kids love to open the windows containing little treats! The Advent Wreath is popular

in the Germanic countries (where it originated, most likely by the Reformers), as well as here in the USA. The Vatican Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy (2001, para. # 98) notes: “The Advent wreath, with the progressive lighting of its four candles, Sunday after Sunday, until the Solemnity of Christmas, is a recollection of the various stages of salvation history prior to Christ’s coming and a symbol of the prophetic light gradually illuminating the long night prior to the rising of the Sun of justice” (cf. Mt 3,20; Lk 1,78). Many think that the preservation of Advent in this era of endless early “Christmas” and “holiday” office parties is a lost cause. I do not consider myself to be a “Scrooge” by any stretch, but I do feel that it is my duty to hold fast as much as possible to the liturgical principle that this is a season of prayerful preparation. Christmas is worth the wait!

- Our annual Pre-Christmas Church cleaning takes place **next Saturday**, December 17 from 9:00-11:00 a.m. This is just one day before Archbishop Christophe Pierre’s (the papal Nuncio) visit to bestow the Pallium upon Archbishop Hebda on Sunday at 2:30 p.m. The pallium is a liturgical vestment that represents his role as Metropolitan Archbishop of the province. Your cleaning help is especially needed this year, as we’d like to tackle the sacristy in addition to the church.
- Forty-one Bowl Games will be played in NCAA Division I college football between December 19 and January 11! Involving 80 teams (two will play in a second game for the Championship), most of which will transport 85 players for the “special” games, I estimate that 6,800 young men will be practicing, travelling, attending media days, etc. rather than studying during the period leading to final exams. Does anyone have a problem with that? I once thought Bowl games were a reward for the truly outstanding teams of the nation. Perhaps I’m a Scrooge after all.
- All are cordially invited to the Pallium Mass, which is celebrated as a Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Our 10:00 a.m. Choir will shift for this one day, singing instead at the Pallium Mass.
- “If you wish to obtain the mercy of God, be yourselves merciful.” (St. Augustine, Sermon 259, 3)
- The Christmas Schedule is published in this bulletin. Please take a copy home for handy reference. Today’s special collection is directed solely to providing Christmas flowers and decorations. You may donate in honor of or in memory of your loved ones. Thank you for your generous support. All names will be published in an upcoming bulletin insert.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector