



Bringing Home the Word

First Sunday of Advent (B)
November 29, 2020

The Rumble Strips of Advent

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy! The sleepy apostles couldn't keep awake with Jesus and drifted off when he most needed them.

I have only fallen asleep at the wheel once. During college, I worked the morning shift starting at 6 AM. After a late night with little sleep, I sluggishly got into my car. Comfortably driving down the highway at about 5:15 AM, I dozed for a few seconds before awakening to the noise of my tires vibrating on the warning tracks—just in time to straighten the wheel and avoid the cement divider.

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 63:16b–17, 19b; 64:2–7

LORD, you are our father;
we are the clay and you our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

1 Corinthians 1:3–9

God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son.

Mark 13:33–37

[Jesus said,] "May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping."

Advent is like those rumble strips. You don't always need them, they are annoying when you accidentally run over them, but they are very important!

We can get tired, trying to keep our hearts awake and attuned to Jesus. The rhythm of life, the background music of the world, the distractions that fly by us—they all contribute to the danger of a passive heart. Running across Advent is like a wake-up call: "Stay awake! He is almost here."

As in driving, there are many distractions vying for your attention, but you learn to focus on what's important. You survey your surroundings, looking for hazards while keeping your eyes on the road. There are many signs to read, but only certain ones point you where you want to go.

Jesus says to be attentive to the signs; learn to interpret their meaning. Understand them, without being distracted by them. Be vigilant, pray for strength, and stay awake and alert. Thanks be to God for those rumble strips! +

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A Word from Pope Francis

Take time, quality time. This means being ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say....Often the other spouse does not need a solution to his or her problems, but simply to be heard, to feel that someone has acknowledged their pain, their disappointment, their fear, their anger.

—*Amoris Laetitia*, March 19, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I believe there is a limited time to my life on earth?
- Since I do not know when Jesus will arrive, isn't peaceful awareness of his eventual return the smartest attitude?

Wait! Don't Skip Advent

By Kathleen M. Basi

Waiting is a pain in the neck. Throughout history, humanity has steadily progressed toward ways to make our lives faster and easier. We now can access information instantaneously in virtual worlds of this and that and have virtually forgotten that patience is still a virtue. Also falling by the wayside are the key concepts of stillness and reflection.

In short, everything the season of Advent invites us to explore goes against the very grain of today's fast-paced society.

In fact, Advent epitomizes another unpleasant quality: uncertainty. The early days of the Advent season reflect first on the triumphant return of Jesus at some unknown point in the future. Over and over we hear that we don't know the day or the hour. And I'm sure I'm not the only one who squirms in church, wondering if I'm living well enough to escape the "winnowing fans" and "unquenchable fires."

So, let's put this all together: Advent asks us to wait in uncertainty while sitting still so we can reflect on the experience. It's no wonder our culture has chosen to skip Advent altogether. Christmas sounds more certain, immediate, and lots more fun!

The season preceding Christmas is a microcosm of our human condition.



Yet Advent is a microcosm of our human condition. There have been plenty of seasons in my life when I have waited in uncertainty for affirmation or resolution to a problem. So often, I've prayed the "billboard" prayer. You know, what you really want is a billboard on the interstate that says in huge letters: "Hey, you! Yes, you! You've made the right decision! Quit second-guessing yourself!"

I know it sounds ridiculous, but God spoke out of a burning bush, didn't he? Parted the Red Sea? Threw manna down into the desert? When you think about it, a billboard doesn't seem like too much to ask for.

But the reality is that despite all those larger-than-life signposts, even the Israelites didn't get to leave Egypt and waltz straight into the Holy Land with the Messiah at the head of their nation. They had to wander around in the desert for a generation, encountering God, rejecting and accepting him time and again. Even after they got their Promised Land, they had to wait another few thousand years for their Messiah. And when he finally came, he looked so different from what they expected, it was impossible for many to claim him.

Then, as now, God's plan is revealed through processes. Those processes usually take a lot more time than we expect. Yet we can't skip over them, because it's in the uncertainty of the process that we encounter God. If we skip the waiting, we risk missing the point entirely. +

PRAYER

Lord, I have become distracted by the things of this world. Guide my steps and lead me safely back home to you. Help me to respond to the needs of others.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 30–
December 5

Monday, St. Andrew:
Rom 10:9–18 / Mt 4:18–22

Tuesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 11:1–10 / Lk 10:21–24

Wednesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 25:6–10a / Mt 15:29–37

Thursday, St. Francis Xavier:
Is 26:1–6 / Mt 7:21, 24–27

Friday, Advent Weekday:
Is 29:17–24 / Mt 9:27–31

Saturday, Advent Weekday: Is 30:19–21,
23–26 / Mt 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6–8

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