

# Advent:

## Four Ways to Pray the Wait

by Beth Davis

Advent: What does it mean to you? I—m not asking you to look at Latin roots, but to use your imagination! I see two parts: *ad* and *vent*.

Stay with me on this. *Ad* is short for *advertising*. *Vent* is a hole in the floor or ceiling that lets air flow into a room. The two combined form the word *Advent*.

If you follow my —logic— here, a reasonable assumption would be that Advent means *advertising airflow*. Really? Well, don—t use it on your SAT.

But think: If we —do— Advent well, then our very lives flow in a way that advertises Jesus! What a concept! So, just how do we do Advent well?

First, let—s examine the Advent *wreath*, a circle of evergreen with three purple candles and one pink one. Some wreaths also have three purple ribbons plus a pink one adorning them.

This past year, our church decided not to display a circular wreath, but stretched it out across the wall behind the sanctuary. Picture this: a long line of grapevine, tall votive candles sectioning it into four pieces.

Each week, as we came closer to Christmas, the bony, bare grapevine, section by section, came alive with boughs of evergreen and sparkling candles.

Each week, the bleakness of winter, represented by that dead grapevine, was replaced by the hope of things green. Darkness grew bright. The horizontal garland reminded us that Christmas was coming still closer.

Advent, the waiting period of Christmas, is such a gift. *How* we wait is key—and the theme of this *Youth Update*.

## Watch Your Wait

This is the 21st century! We can drive 70 miles per hour. DSL lets us surf the Net without a wait. FedEx can deliver in 24 hours. The Concorde can fly us to Paris in less time than we can drive to Aunt Jean—s for holiday dinner. The grocery sells the ingredients to create a gourmet meal in less than 20 minutes. *Why wait?*

Why not just jump right to Christmas? *Because waiting is a good teacher.*

To wait well is something that must be learned. And, like everything else we need to learn, we can turn to Scripture as a great instructor: —All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation [proving wrong], for correction and for training in righteousness— (2 Timothy 3:16).

Since the Advent season has four weeks, let—s study four scriptural stories of God—s people waiting. These are not your typical Christmas stories about wise men and shepherds and may surprise you at first glance. Each reveals something about *waiting well*. Take these as the focus of your prayer as you *wait well* through the weeks of Advent!

If you celebrate Advent as the gift of waiting, then it may not matter what Christmas gift doesn—t fit or didn—t arrive in time. You may experience Christmas in a wonderfully new way, because you yourself will be renewed along the wait!

## **Week ONE: Wait in Prayer**

Wait well like Tobiah and Sarah. Who are they? Turn to the Book of Tobit. God puts a desire for a woman named Sarah in Tobiah's heart. But Sarah has a pretty threatening past. ———

Her father Raguel explains to Tobiah: —I have given her in marriage to seven men, all of whom were kinsmen of ours, and all died on the very night they approached her— (Tobit 7:10-11).

Pretty scary! Rather than run from this woman who has made it through *seven* weddings but not *one* honeymoon, Tobiah follows God's instructions, given by the archangel Raphael, for getting rid of the husband-killing demon.

Then, Tobit does something else quite wise: He prays with his wife before they lie together: —My love, get up. Let us pray and beg our Lord to have mercy on us and to grant us deliverance— (Tobit 8:4).

Tobiah's prayer is beautiful: —Blessed are you, O God of our fathers; praised be your name forever and ever. Let the heavens and all your creation praise you forever. You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support . . . Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine not because of lust, but for a noble purpose. Call down your mercy on me and on her, and allow us to live together to a happy old age— (Tobit 8:5-7).

To Tobiah and his bride, Sarah, waiting well means praying for blessing first and proceeding without sin (in this case, lust), with a desire to use the gift of their marriage for a noble purpose. They pray while they wait, and then honor God as they proceed.

During this first week of Advent, be like Tobiah and Sarah.

- Pray while you wait. Be random about that. Pray while you are waiting for your toast to pop up, pray while you are waiting on the basketball court, pray while your teacher passes back the last quiz (and not just for a good grade!). Like Tobiah, keep your prayer simple and begin with praise!
- Be of clean heart. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Make sure your actions, like Tobiah's and Sarah's, are —for a noble purpose.— Noble purposes are those that honor God. Plan some act of service, some good deeds with which to honor God in this Advent season.

Even in your Christmas shopping, seek God's direction in what to purchase and how much to spend. Be pleasant to your family not because of what you will receive on Christmas morning but because loving kindness is noble.

*Pray for blessing. Then honor God by moving forward nobly.*

## **Week TWO: Wait With Patience**

Wait well like the woman in Matthew's Gospel. She has been sick for 12 years with a hemorrhage. To hemorrhage means to experience continual bleeding. The woman's sickness probably wasn't evident to others, but she was annoyingly aware of it herself.

Surely she is tired *of* it and probably tired *from* it. Her faith propels her to hope that her wait for a cure is nearly over.

So the unnamed woman grows bold in her desire to be healed and approaches Christ: —If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured— (Matthew 9:21).

So convinced is she that Christ can heal her that she will settle for touching just the tassel of his cloak. The tassel, or fringe, was to remind the Hebrew man that he was to keep God—s law. It is no coincidence then, that the fringe, staying connected to God—s law, is her connection to the gift of healing.

Her 12-year wait and her faith in Christ the healer are rewarded. He says to her, —Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you.— And from that hour the woman was cured— (Matthew 9:22).

During this second week of Advent, why not do a thorough search of your life? From what do you need to be cured? What sin in your life makes you weak? From what do you need to be healed? What afflicts you? What hooks you? Use this checklist to prepare yourself for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- Making gods of your activities, possessions, friendships
- Cursing
- Habitual dishonoring of your parents or family
- Gossip or slander that kills another—s spirit or actions that steal another—s dignity
- Lustful thoughts/activities that lead you to sexual sin
- Food addictions: eating too little or too much or eating only for comfort or out of boredom
- Habitual cheating or lying (even the little white ones). Remember that to lie means *to withhold the truth from someone who has the right to know*.
- Being possessed by your possessions, and in this season, being obsessed by what you are hoping to receive this Christmas.

Ask the Lord to reveal to you from what he wants to release you this week. Carve out some time to be still and *wait* for his reply. Then, visit the tabernacle in your church where the Body of Christ dwells. In reverent prayer, know with certainty that the visit will cure you and heal you and make you whole.

*Wait patiently and know that the touch of Christ will cure you.*

## **Week THREE: Wait With Wisdom and Joy**

John—s Gospel brings us the story of a woman ripped from her adulterous bed and brought before Jesus. If she is clad at all, she wears barely enough to shield her from the eyes of those who stand ready to stone her, a penalty in accord with Mosaic law.

Remember that, to a Hebrew in Jesus— day, public nakedness was a terrible humiliation.

The Pharisees stand ready to trick Jesus should he not support this commandment. They also stand ready to kill the woman for her adultery: —Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?— They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him— (John 8:5-6).

How does Jesus handle this moment? He waits!

Jesus takes time to think and ponder. Then he bends down and begins to write

on the ground with his finger (John 8:6).

Is he stalling for time or could he be teaching us to wait well, to wait for wisdom to respond in a godly way?

What happens next? —But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, —Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her— (John 8:7). They went away one by one, beginning with the oldest man. So Jesus was left alone with the woman.

Christ thinks through this test, and then responds with wisdom, a gift of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2). —Jesus straightened up and said to her, —Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?—

—She replied, —No one, sir.— Then Jesus said, —Neither do I condemn you. Go [and] from now on do not sin any more— (John 8:10-11). You can imagine her joy!

During this third week of Advent, the week when we light the pink candle for joy, focus on waiting before you speak or act. Pray in the waiting for the wisdom to respond to all people and all situations in a way that reflects God and his command for your life to bear his image.

Pray to be a person of joy! Just as Christ—s merciful treatment of this sinful woman brings her joy, let your experience of the mercy of Christ sink in.

God is good. If our lives tell that story, we spread joy. This is the best Christmas gift you can give to anyone, the gift of a joyful spirit! To have joy is to have an enthusiasm for just being alive (the word *enthusiasm* comes from the roots *en* and *theos* which mean —in God—). Joy means that more than your mouth smiles. Your body participates, too!

*Use the waiting time to joyfully discover God—s wisdom. Be a person of joy throughout this week.*

## **Week FOUR: Wait With Anticipation**

Gabriel the archangel visits Mary to tell her two things. Not only will she bear a child but he also tells her: —And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God— (Luke 1:36-37).

Both Mary and Elizabeth wait —in joyful hope for the coming of the Savior— (as we say at Mass) and the one who will herald the Savior—s coming. Both women have much to prepare for, and their preparations are prayers themselves.

In this final week of Advent, wait in joyful hope for Christmas, the coming of the Savior. This is the week it will be hardest to be patient. You will find yourself waiting this week more than all the other weeks before.

You—ll be alert to waiting in line, waiting for service or for your meal in a restaurant or for slow pedestrians to cross the street, waiting for the clock to tick the end of the last day before the holiday break, waiting for the bus, waiting for your grandparents to arrive safely and, finally, waiting to open Christmas presents.

To wait well is to wait with the confidence that the Savior himself is coming. To wait well is to be like Elizabeth, —filled with the holy Spirit— (Luke 1:41). To wait well is to be like Mary, living a life that —proclaims the greatness of the Lord—

(Luke 1:46). To wait well is to wait with faith that his coming will renew us, transform us, revive us, reminding us of the best gift of the season, the Savior himself!

Pray the Hail Mary every time you find yourself waiting and preparing this week. When you set the table for dinner, when you study for a test, when you load the dishwasher, when you drive to the mall, when you wrap presents, —Hail Mary— your way through it. By staying hope-filled and prayerful, you will be preparing yourself to receive the gift of Christmas in a whole new way this year!

*Wait with anticipation for the coming of Emmanuel!*

***Beth Davis serves as the Great Lakes Regional Director for an international Catholic youth ministry model called LIFE TEEN. Now in 13 countries and 850 parishes in the United States, LIFE TEEN—s mission is —to lead teens closer to Christ.— Beth and her husband have four daughters, two of whom are teenagers.***

*Na'Cole Benton (15), Christopher Bissonnette (16) and Sarah Koch (16) met at the family home of Maria Kemper, summer intern at St. Anthony Messenger Press, to discuss this issue. Christopher and Sarah are homeschooled and are both seniors.*

**Q.** You say that Advent is a time to advertise our faith in the Savior's birth, but how can we help the community during Advent?

**A.** Acts of service are perhaps the best way to advertise that we have faith in Jesus, especially when we serve with joy. When teens organize themselves to serve their community, it is a powerful testimony. From small random acts to community-wide organized events, the key is to serve because you love the Lord! Remember: Everyone thinks of serving during the holidays. Make service such a part of your life that you look throughout the year for ways to give of your time.

**Q.** Your suggestions for Advent seem geared to personal growth. How can we prepare for Advent as a family and Church community?

**A.** The lighting of the Advent wreath each night before dinner is a tradition in many Catholic families. Make it a priority in yours. Consider tying in the Scriptures offered here as you grow together as "wonderful waiters" this Advent. These can be great discussion starters at the family dinner table. In the parish, Advent is celebrated well when it is planned well. If your

church does not have a liturgy-planning commission, volunteer to serve on such a commission yourself.

**Q.** You make no mention of Christmas cribs, Christmas trees or presents. How can we fit these normal preparations into the spirit of Advent?

**A.** The Advent wreath alone "decorates" the Church during Advent, keeping us focused on the lighted candles, always a reminder of the light of Christ. As the candles grow in brightness each week, so too are we to grow in awareness of being the light of Christ in the world. While it may not be practical or desirable to wait to decorate our homes (or our lockers or bedrooms) until Christmas Eve, it does seem possible to measure our progress somehow by decorating slowly, letting the decorations "grow," especially on the tree.

Borrowed from Latin *adventus* (‘arrival, approach’). IPA(key): /ˈæd.vɛnt/, /ˈæd.vɛnt/. *advent* (plural *advents*). arrival; onset; a time when something first comes or appears. 1741, [Edward Young], ‘Night the Fifth. The Relapse. [in] The Complaint. Or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality. Night the Fifth, London: [Robert] Dodsley [OCLC 1102703094: Death's dreadful advent. Translation for 'advent' in the free English-Russian dictionary and many other Russian translations. Context sentences for "advent" in Russian. These sentences come from external sources and may not be accurate. bab.la is not responsible for their content. EnglishIt was only 200 years ago that we had the advent of the Industrial Revolution. [more\\_vert](#). [open\\_in\\_new](#) Link to source. Information about the progressive-rock band Advent. ADVENT - The Official Website. May 29th at 4 PM EDT: Advent's first concert (video release event). by Alan on May 27, 2020. [njproghouse](#). 146 subscribers. [Subscribe](#). NJ Proghouse ‘From the Vaults’ Series with Advent (2007). [Watch later](#). [Share](#).