



This month might be the very best time of the year. Advent, the beginning of the church year, means decorating the altar with blue – arguably the prettiest of the liturgical colors. It is a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus. Many think it's preparing to celebrate his birth, but, really, it's a time for us to reflect on the fact that he is coming again. My New Testament professor – to this day – always looks up to the clouds in the sky to see if Jesus might be on his way back.

I know that many church leaders put a lot of energy into discouraging people from rushing into Christmas. At this point in time, that is a counter-cultural act. To focus, entirely, on Advent and hold off Christmas would mean avoiding school and work functions; putting on blinders to get through stores; and turning off the radio and TV every time there is a holiday special or Christmas music. Since none of us are likely to stick our fingers in our ears and start humming each time Christmas comes up in conversation, we probably need to find a way to hold the anticipation of Advent *and* the joy of Christmas together.

We can start by really thinking about what matters to us during this time and letting go of the other things. If our kids don't want to perform in the school holiday show, let them sit it out. If party preparations are weighing on your mind, don't do it. If you are struggling to come up with ideas of gifts to give people that already have everything, don't waste your time and money at the mall. Let it go!

Instead, crank up the songs you want to listen to. Watch the movies you want to watch (who doesn't love a good Hallmark Christmas movie?). Bake the food you want to eat and share it with the people you love. Prioritize the

relationships that matter to you. Life is already so full of responsibilities and obligations, give yourself a break this holiday season. The world around you won't make this easy, but only you can decide how to prioritize your resources.

Take the time and money that you aren't wasting on things you don't care about, and use them to do God's work in the world. Feed the hungry, care for the lonely, and worship the One that has given you all that have. God was willing to be born into this world, as a human baby to be with us: Immanuel! Look for him this Advent. While it is possible that you might see him returning in the clouds, you can be 100% sure he is in the poor, the sick, the prisoner, and the foreigner (Matthew 25).

My favorite kids' Advent/Christmas short is *Martin the Cobbler*, based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. It was made in 1977 in Claymation – comparable to some of our other Christmas favorites, like Rudolph The Red Nose Reindeer. It is free now on Youtube (see the link below). Excellent for people of all ages to get into the spirit of Advent.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W91E_iE97Nc&list=PLXIxUBgDUdQ9WJTaiRJItUZg1WFndFnKL&index=16

I wish for you all a **Blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas!!!**



Angel Circle

The Angels will meet this month on December 8th at 10:00 am.

Merry Christmas,
Barbara Kaplan