

Impact



Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

We wait

"I just can't wait!" How many times have you already heard a child exclaim that he or she just can't wait for Christmas? Perhaps you're thinking about this, too. Some of us truly love Christmas and the anticipation of the season is part of the fun -- shopping, preparing, trees, cards, parties, and all. Others of us are not as fond of this time of the year. It seems to be blown out of proportion and for some, the hoopla takes away from what Christmas really means.

Advent is a season of waiting, not only for the celebration of Christmas, but also for Christ's return in glory. We linger in anticipation, preparing our minds and hearts for such great mysteries. By doing so, we appreciate more fully that for which we wait. We are called to be stewards of all of this, because in the seasons of Advent and Christmas, we focus on the message of God's love for humanity.

In the incarnation, Jesus shows us the love of God. Christ witnesses this love in the meager dwelling of our humanity, and in the dwelling of a manger. Throughout Advent, especially from December 17 until Christmas, we sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Emmanuel, which means "God is with us," is a particularly powerful title for Christ. When we call Jesus "Emmanuel" we are making a statement of deep faith and enduring hope. If God is with us, there is nothing to fear in life or death. If God is with us, we can trust that all will be well, regardless of the difficulties of the present moment. If God is with us, we can mirror God's lavish giving by giving of ourselves and our resources, and know that in doing so, we help others to see that God is with them.

In Advent and Christmas, we are assured that God is with us! Our annual immersion into this truth provides comfort and calls us to shape our living as good stewards of God's varied grace, especially the knowledge that Jesus is our Emmanuel.

We watch for Christ

They watch for Christ who are sensitive, eager, apprehensive in mind, who are awake, alive, quick-sighted, zealous in honoring him, who look for him in all that happens, and who would not be surprised, who would not be over-agitated or overwhelmed, if they found that he was coming at once...

This, then, is to watch: to be detached from what is present, and to live in what is unseen; to live in the thought of Christ as he came once, and as he will come again; to desire his second coming, from our affectionate and grateful remembrance of his first. — John Henry Newman

Impact this Advent

Look for Christ where there is love. In the care of family members for one another; among friends; when you are compelled to greet a stranger or care for someone in need; in word and sacrament in the Mass; in the healing of Reconciliation.

Look for Christ in quiet. When your heart is filled with peace, especially when nothing can explain the calm you feel. When you find resolution in conflict; healing of body, mind, and spirit.

Look for Christ during difficulty. When simple things are hard; when life seems insurmountable; when your heart aches.

Look for Christ in others. Those who need care and those who give it. In the eyes of a friend who is in pain. In the lonely neighbor; the homeless person on the street; the sick and dying.

Look for Christ in unexpected places. When you least expect to experience God, remember, God is there!



Impact this Christmas

Reflect

As you celebrate Christmas this year, reflect on the gift of Jesus' birth. How does Christmas reveal God's love to you?

Pray

Prayerfully read the gospel for Christmas Mass at night, Luke 2:1-14. Put yourself in the place of Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. What does each teach you about God's love for us in Jesus Christ?

Live

Christmas is more than a day. It is a season, and a way of life! This Christmas, make a commitment to take Christ's love to heart, and to share Christ's love at home, work or school, in your parish, and your local community.

Words fail us. We do not have the words to describe the incredible news of Jesus' birth. Awesome. Astounding. Incredible. Powerful. And so much more!

At Christmas, we try to put into words the mystery of God's love, which is beyond our understanding. God so desires to be near to us that God became one of us. The good news of Jesus' birth is timeless and at the same time, is for us in our time and place.

Jesus, the Word of God, is God's love incarnate, in flesh and time. Jesus proves once and for all that God is not distant or absent from the real stuff of our lives, our vulnerability, joys and sorrows. Jesus speaks a sacred word to all who are weary – now, as ever, that means all of us – shining a light for all who are discouraged by the darkness of illness, conflict, violence, natural disaster, and human weakness.

And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Who are we, that God loves us so? People throughout the ages have pondered the mystery of God's great love for us in Jesus Christ, which shines through all turmoil, doubt, and discouragement. St. Peter Chrysologus captured our astonishment when he said, "The magi are filled with awe by what they see; heaven on earth and earth in heaven; man in God and God in man; they see enclosed in a tiny body the one whom the entire world cannot contain."

As we celebrate Christmas this year, decorating our homes, pausing to look at the Christ-child in the manger, placing lights and ornaments just so on our trees, and listening to Christmas carols that tell the story of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, let us be mindful of the deep truth that the season proclaims: Jesus is the perfect image of God whose love took human form and because of this, we have great hope. We also bear responsibility to live as God's image in the world. "Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us." (CCC, 526) This season, let us proclaim and live the mystery and message of Christmas: Jesus Christ is born!