

# Advent is a wake-up call to make time for Christ

I would love to have an extra hour or two per day. I'd have more time for things like prayer, time spent with family and friends, making progress on my reading pile, exercise, and even to get a little more sleep. But like most people, I'm "too busy," and every week that goes by seems to bring with it a twinge of guilt and regret for the things I'm not getting done.

God gave me a bit of a wake-up call about my time earlier this year, when an update to my android phone gave me a new app called Digital Well-Being. This app (like Apple's Screen Time) is meant to give a clearer picture of your digital habits, using timers to offer you an up-to-the-minute report of how you're spending your time online each day.

The results I read were humbling. What I learned was that on any given day, I was spending hours looking at my phone screen. And while I might try to make an argument that my phone use is primarily related to my work and ministry – which does account for some of it – there was a significant amount of my time being spent on things that, in the end, don't matter to me that much.

Whether it was some game I'd downloaded, checking social media, or reading about what's going on with my favorite hockey team: it was all adding up to too much time spent staring at a tiny screen. This moment of self-realization has resulted with my making some significant change to my phone use, with the simple goal of making more space for the things that really matter to me.

In many ways, it's been an excellent preparation for Advent.

As we journey through these four weeks, we are presented with the challenge not to repeat the mistakes made by so many at the first Christmas. From the time we were children, we heard that Jesus was born in a Bethlehem stable simply because there was no room anywhere else. We also know that the only ones outside of the stable who paid any attention to that birth were the shepherds and the Magi. This is a staggering thought when you consider how all of Israel was begging God to send the Messiah – they were desperately hoping to see what happened on the first Christmas – and yet they missed it. Perhaps they overlooked it because they were busy, distracted, or resigned to a belief that things were never going to change for them.

This is a scene which seems to repeat itself over and over again in our day to day lives; we're all so busy that we have no room for Him either. It might be the sheer weight of regular commitments whether they are family, work, or school related. Perhaps, like me, you've made a habit of trying to fill every quiet moment with something on a tiny screen. Maybe it's something else. In any case, this season offers us both the opportunity to remedy this situation ...

or to make it worse.

Advent is meant to be the wake-up call which challenges us to make room for the Lord. We can do this on our own, spending time in prayer, reading Scripture, praying the Rosary, or attending weekday Masses more often. We can do this with others, by spending more time engaging with family and friends, by subscribing to one of the many “Advent Reflection” e-mails and apps, by partaking in an Advent mission or retreat in your area, or engaging with one of the many worthy community service projects this time of year presents.

On the Second Sunday of Advent we hear John the Baptist preaching repentance in anticipation of the coming of Christ ([Matthew 3:1-12](#)). This is also an invitation to get ourselves to Reconciliation – something our parishes readily offer during this season with penitential services and additional Confession times throughout the season (check your parish bulletin for details).

On the other hand, it’s during the weeks of Advent that all the preparations for Christmas can swallow up time we already feel like we don’t have. We can lose ourselves even further in all of the gatherings and external preparations: decorating, baking, shopping, and celebrating. The danger here is that we are numbing ourselves to the wake-up call that Christ and the Church are giving us – leaving us in the same boat as so many were during that first Christmas.

We risk also having no room for Him in our lives, and missing His coming among us just as they did. This is why the Church reminds us that the Advent season is not merely a time of preparation to celebrate an event that happened once, in history. It’s also meant to be a reminder of what we mean each Sunday when we profess that He will “come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end” – that we really do believe He is coming back some day. These weeks of preparation should help us to be ready whether Jesus’ return is tomorrow or a thousand years from now. Advent also reminds us, that between His first and final comings, Jesus comes to us even now (particularly in the Eucharist).

In these days which can be busier than our normal schedules, it is important that we find time for Christ. This may require a little self-examination and some difficult choices, but the season of Advent offers us an abundance of tools to help us make room for Jesus. May this season be a time when we can both make room for Jesus in our lives and recognize the ways He has come, is coming, and will come again.

***“...to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God”*** ([John 1:12](#)).

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