



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

December 2020

Dear friends,

Advent, which comes from the Latin word meaning *coming*, is intended to be a season of preparation for the arrival of Christ, but often, this underrated liturgical season is set aside in favour of the more popular pre-Christmas rush. Yet, Advent is a time worth making. While we typically regard Advent as a joyous season, it is also intended to be a period of preparation, much like Lent. This year, the season of Advent is observed from the first Sunday of Advent on November the 29th to Thursday, December the 24th.

Given our unique circumstances this year, preparing for the coming of Christ will be different. Yet, even in the midst of the Pandemic, the season of Advent is important. How do we journey to Christmas? Consider taking some quiet time for you and your family, reading, and reflecting on a short daily devotion and listening to Advent music. Decorate for the season with an Advent wreath and as a family, light a candle every week. Assemble a Nativity scene in your home and talk about the Christmas story. Support a social justice initiative and donate to a local charity in your community. As Christmas approaches, discern which activities to dismiss on the side of dedicating more time to your family.

There is no doubt that Christmas is a beautiful time of the year as we anticipate the birth of Christ. He is the reason for the season, and we need to celebrate his birth appropriately and with great reverence. Yet the Christmas season also brings with it the hustle and bustle of sales and deadlines that veer us away from its true meaning. For us Christians, Advent is that distraction; that opportunity to prepare our hearts and minds for his coming.

As we journey to Christmas, let us remember to pause and consider what God is asking of us in this season of Advent. Take time to appreciate the people around you, pray, read scripture, attend Mass - in person or remotely, and participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. While we cannot erase the challenges of the past nine months, we can still rejoice in knowing that Christ is coming amid shouts of joy.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton