

Advent 2025

Last year for the Advent Season, my two associates and I wrote an Advent reflection book to walk you through the 4 Sundays of Lent. It was very easy for you to identify who wrote each reflection. It was my intention then to write a Lenten Reflection Series by myself for Lent of 2026. It is finished and it will be available in February of 2026. For Advent this year, this article will have to do. My schedule has been hectic and this is about all I can do. By the way, I am writing these lines in mid-July to give you an idea of my workload.

You have often heard the expression, “Happy Lent” or “Happy Advent.” How could either of these two preparatory periods be happy? Well for Advent, a happy Advent as Catholics comes from embracing both the joyful anticipation of Christ’s coming and the quiet preparation it calls for.

For me who loves the Christmas Season, I get all my decorating done before Advent begins, so I can enjoy this preparatory season surrounded by the joy that is to come. Many of my suggestions below I have been practicing for years. Here goes:

- **Slow down and find some quiet time.** December is so hectic and we easily fall prey to shopping too much, spending too much, eating too much and not doing enough to maintain our spiritual lives. Turn off the TV and put down the phone. Find your prayer chair and enjoy the quiet of a fall or winter’s day by looking at nature, feeling the warmth of the fireplace and reading quietly from scripture.
- **Pray Daily.** Like my suggestion above, prayer is important during these December days. We are all familiar with the Advent Wreath or Advent Calendar. Read the daily Mass readings which can easily be found on the USCCB website.
- **Go to Confession.** Preparing for Christmas means making room for Christ by removing spiritual clutter. We will have our regularly scheduled confessions. Reflect on where you need healing or change, and invite Jesus into those places.
- **Practice generous love.** Continue the practice I suggested to start in November. Continue it during December. Give to the poor, donate to food banks, or our Missions committee and the work they do in Conway. Reach out to someone lonely, sick, or forgotten this season.
- **Play Christmas music.** In preparation for Christmas, Sacred Christmas music can not only set the mood for Christmas but help prepare our hearts and minds for Christ.
- **Keep Christ at the Center of this Advent and Christmas.** Go to a daily Mass. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Here is a prayer to help you each day of this Advent Season:

Heavenly Father, as I begin this day, I pause to remember that you are near. Advent is a time of waiting, of longing, and of hope. Prepare my heart, Lord, for the coming of your Son. Help me to slow down amidst the busyness, to reflect on your promises, to listen to your word, and to open my life to your grace. Come, Lord Jesus, into my heart, into my family, into the world. Dispel the darkness with your light. Fill me with peace, joy, and love, that I may share your presence with others.
THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.

Father John

*Note—many people have requested a copy of my 5-part November Homily series. I plan to release the full series in a November 2026 *From the Pastor’s Desk*.