

# Pastor's Note: advent in preparation for Christmas

Advent is a time during which we prepare our hearts, our minds, and our souls for both the end of the world and for the coming of Christ at Christmas. We also prepare our homes by decorating for the Holidays. I was listening to Cardinal Timothy Dolan on the Catholic channel as I was driving home from Montrose. He was talking about how there was a new hunger to give more meaning to the Christmas Holidays.

So many of us begin Christmas right around Halloween and continue all the way through to Christmas Day, terminating the holiday with December 26th. By the time we get to Christmas we are already tired of Christmas. And so we're looking for more meaning, more understanding, and a deeper appreciation of Christmas which has been reduced to materialistic exploits commercialism and celebration of "the Holidays". We even forget what "the Holidays are".

The Latin American and Mexican cultures have a long tradition of novenas in preparation for both Christmas and the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe these would be ways of preparing yourself spiritually by reciting the rosary every evening from December 3rd through the 12th for Our Lady of Guadalupe, and from the night of the 16th all the way through the night of the 24th for Christmas. Both novenas will be live streamed on the Comunidad del Alfarero Facebook Page.

May I recommend to everyone the idea that we prepare for Christmas with advent. A simple way to do this is of course the advent wreath, or just a circle of 4 candles (adding one new lit candle each week) in the middle of the dinner table or coffee table in our home. You might put an image of the Holy Family in the middle of it to emphasize that as well. Or, you might place a Violet ribbon in the middle of the table worked into a bow. That would be enough to remind us that advent is a time of preparation and, by extension penance. Penance might take the shape of abstaining from certain foods as it does in my Polish background, or it might be just re storing the abstaining of meats on Fridays to another part of the year. In any event, these would help us bring to mind that we are preparing for Jesus , and not just for material gifts.

And of course, in this age of covid the huge family gatherings at Christmas may not be possible. You might want to do an extra prayer each night of advent and then hold off on gift giving Until Christmas day, reserving Christmas Eve as a spiritual vigil. Of course, we will have mass in the evening which will be live streamed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in the morning. Plan on putting that as part of your Christmas celebration this year.