



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

Advent 2022

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

No one likes to be caught unprepared for Christmas. Whether from oversight, neglect or accident we rightly feel terrible and our joy is diminished if an invited guest shows up for Christmas dinner and we don't have a gift for him. To avoid that embarrassment, we prepare for Christmas by making a list, thinking of a meaningful gifts for those on the list and shopping ahead of time for it.

Advent is a four week season of preparation. More fundamental than shopping for gifts, planning the dinner or sending a card, Advent is a time of *spiritual* preparation for joyfully commemorating Christ's first coming and being prepared for his second.

Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Savior, is the greatest gift we will ever receive. He is the true reason for joy at Christmas and throughout life. God with His abundant mercy and peaceful presence is with us. That presence and our faith strengthen us with a certain hope that as Christ conquered sin, death and evil, we can share forever in that joy, not just for a season but forever.

It takes a lived faith to believe and confidently absorb that outlook. The challenge of Advent is to prioritize our spiritual preparation because the pressures of life and secondary distractions of the season can divert our attention and dampen our awareness of the deeper and enduring spiritual joys of Christ's life and love.

May we include deep spiritual preparation this Advent along with our other tasks. We can do both. May we search gift catalogs and study the scriptures, send cards and offer prayers, decorate the house and prepare our souls, attend concerts and parties, and go to Mass and Confession.

That spiritual preparation will allow us to celebrate Christmas with deep and lasting spiritual joy. It will also allow us to avoid being empty handed when He returns but rather full of profound hope, wonder and peace.

With every prayerful best wish for a Blessed Advent, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester