

## ***ADVENT A TIME OF PREPARING, WAITING, AND LISTENING,***

The advent season comes during the most gloomy, depressing time of the year, when it is usually cold, even frosty, the days are so short that it is dark as we get up and dark again by four o'clock in the afternoon, so not a very joyful time of year. Yet, this is the time of year when we focus on an important mystery of our faith the incarnation. Advent and the build up to Christmas can be a busy time for many; there are so many things to do and people to think of. Yet, it is very much a family time of year, family members want to give to their loved ones and friends....a time to acknowledge and cherish friendships with gratitude and love.

Today we are bombarded by the tinsel and Christmas music as early October in the shops. The business world ensures that the customers are well conditioned to fact that they must prepare to buy and we all can very quickly become part of that commercial side of the season even with our very small purses.

It is a far cry from the advent season we grew up with. There was a similarity between Lent and Advent, that sense of preparing in a penitential way for the greater. It was the tradition of making the effort to attend daily mass during for the four weeks and the preparation for Christmas were centered in the home. The making of the Christmas cake and pudding were a real sense of joy. The tradition of everyone getting a stir of the pudding as it was being made was important; the idea that we were one and all helped was celebrated. Of course our mother was the one who really did the planning and the work behind the baking etc., and she loved doing it for us even when we grew up. Each year she looked for a new receipt for the cake or pudding by sharing with her friends. It was the same with the preparing of the turkey; it took months of nurturing for it to be ready for the Christmas, all this remote preparation gave a great sense of hope of something beautiful and satisfying ahead. Then there was the excitement of the Christmas candle in the window, that lovely inviting red glow that gave a feeling of beckoning in, but around it was the caution of extreme care that it is safely placed in the stand to ensure

nothing caught fire. Then a great joy was going out to the hedges to gather holly, and it was important that we got holly with red berries on it. The lovely fresh holly was the main decoration, placed by pictures and on shelves. But the setting up of the small crib was the crowning point of the preparation, the year that we first had lights for it was magic. The crib was my father's pride and joy, he would tell us "that is the message of Christmas we must never forget it" There was something very special about Mass on Christmas Eve, a great sense of joy and welcome always surrounded us as we went to church and as children that sense of curiosity as to what Santa might bring was an added joy.

When I think back it was that simple way of living out their faith that my parents built firm relationships within the family, which was very evident at specific times of the year like Advent. This made me understand that doing simple, ordinary things well gives joy and hope. They may not have lectured us on serving God in your neighbour etc. but they taught us by their love and dedication.

God my Teacher,  
During Advent I ask you to guide me  
In your ways and with your wisdom,  
I will listen closely deep within myself and trust  
You with my life.



"Inviting God In"

Joyce Rupp pg. 23