

Spending More Time in Prayer this Advent without adding a Minute to your Schedule!

Happy New Year Sisters and Brothers!

Today is the First Sunday of Advent and also the First Day of our new Liturgical Year.

A New Year begins with Joys and Expectations, anticipating the wonderful new things we can do.

Our readings today have a message for us: Wake up! Our second reading told us that now "is the hour for you to awake from sleep." Jesus was more direct saying simply, "Stay awake... and be prepared!"

We are meant to Stay Awake and be prepared for Jesus; For His Second Coming, His birth on Christmas Day and to remember that He never left.

He is always right here and if we are not awake, we are in danger of missing the presence of God in our midst.

So How are you going to Celebrate Advent!

We are given this beautiful, peaceful, and calming season of Advent, right in the middle of our busiest time of the year.

I know that each of you want to spend extra time in special prayer during this Advent Season. But you might be saying:

Deacon you just don't know the list of things that I have to get done. Well I have some understanding, as I am also a Dad, Grandfather and a Husband.

I have 2 Lists, Each list has a name.

The First List which is really long - I'll call the "Giving List", but that name is going to change.

The name for the 2nd list, I will tell you later.

So let look at the Giving List and what is on it.

- Lights, Decorating, Kids shows, Cooking, cleaning, shopping,
- Company, visits, buying gifts.
- Family Traditions
- All add to our busy life

What if we could spend a lot of time in prayer this Advent without adding 1 more minute of time to our busy schedules?

Don't forget, it is God who gives us this List, and He knows there's a lot to do to prepare for the birth of a baby.

Bring God with you into this List. Let it be your prayer, your special time with God.

Take all the things you need to do and all the people you will be with, and put them all into your heart with God united in prayer.

Be creative! God is! If you do this, then the Giving List becomes your Grace List because you are sharing in God's own life - And He will Surprise and Lead You.

So let's take a Look at what might be on your Grace List:

Lights: Inside and out - all a lot of work. Ask yourself why are you doing these lights? Isaiah said "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light." That's your answer:

- This light is from God - when you are all done you can stand back and Look at your lights:
- Regardless if it is a lot of Lights or one small light, think WOW I did these lights for you God, I did them for my Kids, my family.

Decorating: When putting up decorations - think - WOW my great Aunt or a good friend gave me this special ornament, or here is the Egg Carton Star my son made years ago.

All these are gifts God gave you, He gave you these people - they can be a beautiful thought and prayer.

Shows, Kids Concerts: A beautiful Grace from God for the people in your life - make a prayer of thanksgiving while holding them in your heart.

Shopping, Cooking, Cleaning, Company and Visiting: which takes up a lot of Time.

Something God Loves. He really loves people getting together, and all these people He has given out of His love for You. So embrace them and make each one your prayer and enjoy it.

If have a full house, and somebody says they have no where to go, or they want to bring someone, and you think where do I put them? Remember Bethlehem and make - Room at the Inn - Jesus will be glad you did.

Family Traditions: An important part of your family as well as adding new traditions too as your family grows.

God loves these Fun things and gives you ideas. Put Candles on your Christmas Desert and sing Happy Birthday to baby Jesus.

We always ask our Kids, if it is Jesus Birthday, why do you get all the Gifts. Think about that.

Buying or Making Gifts: For special people in your life.

Please Take GOD Shopping with You. You'll have fun and God is the greatest Gift Giver who enjoys being with you.

When you find that perfect gift for that special person and can hardly wait to give them that gift. Stop and think the Excitement and Joy you are feeling comes totally and completely from God.

God prepares Gifts for you constantly throughout your life; and is so happy when you recognize and accept them.

Now let us look at the 2nd List, which is Very Important - hopefully you can make it as long as the first list, and it Absolutely requires NO TIME or NO Effort.

Its Name is the "Accepting List" and its name will change.

Now when you give that special gift on Christmas that you were so super excited about, and your special person responds "Oh thanks."

And you think - Are you Kidding me, I absolutely thought you would love this. I worked so hard on it. I put so much of myself into it.

Remember Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given;... and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

God put a lot of Love into this Gift of His Son. Are you accepting it with the Love that it was given to you.

"God loves you as He loves nobody else in the world!"

It is really important to accept Gifts, with the love that they were given.

The Accepting List really changes its name to the "Answer List" - It is God's answer to your prayers.

And so when somebody gives you a gift this Christmas, as you open it and think - hmm what were they thinking.

Think Again: - Oh what love did they put into this gift!

Do you Think this is what God had in mind when He gave us His Son?

A gift is more than something you open up.

All throughout the year when someone says to you - , can I help you, do you respond - oh no, I'm find.

Are you denying that person the grace of helping you?

Maybe you been saying, God when are you going to help me, and He is sending you help. It is important to Accept the Gifts that are offered with love.

So when you are not feeling well and somebody offers to make you a meal, help with the kids, or to do something for you - accept it - with the love it is given.

God gives us His Son with so much love. Soon on the Altar, Jesus is going to give us Himself.

So when you look at Jesus in the Host, think of all the Love He poors into that gift!

He opened His arms on the Cross, He opened the Gates of Heaven for you. He gives you His Holy Spirit.

So when you come to receive communion and say Amen and accept this Gift - think of the Love Jesus put into it.

So my dear Friends, what ever you do or choose to do for this Advent you have the option of ending up with Two Beautiful Lists:

One list of all the Graces and Blessings God has given you and the Second List - your Accepting list where God has answered your prayers.

Praise Be Jesus Christ, Now and Forever, Amen!