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You Snooze, You Lose

by [Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.](#)



Have you ever had one of those days when you just wish God would show up, snap his fingers and work miracles? The people of Israel had about 500 years worth days like that, groaning under the oppression of one tyrant after another. The book of Isaiah gives voice to these sentiments: "O that you would rip open the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you!" (Is 63:19).



The problem is that he answered their prayer. He showed up, in person, working miracles beyond anyone's wildest expectations. But they failed to recognize him. In fact, they crucified him.

How could this have happened? The analysis of Jesus is that they were asleep on the job (Mk 13:33-37). Sure, they busied themselves with a variety of activities, including pious practices. But constant movement can lull you to sleep, like a baby on a long car ride. Asleep means unconscious. Unaware. Lethargic. "There is none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you" (Is. 64:50). Lip service is not enough. Making God a manageable part of one's life is not enough. He demands to be worshiped, which is to say that He must take center stage, be at the top of the priority list. We are not just to believe He exists, but to avidly pursue Him and his will for our lives.

He promises to come again. But this time it won't be in a hidden way. He won't be wearing swaddling clothes, but judge's robes. Advent first and foremost is to remember that he's coming back and that we must be a bit better prepared for the second coming than the Israelites were for the first one.



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So what has our society done with Advent? It's turned it into the shopping days before Christmas. As if we weren't already distracted enough from the things of God, now it's time to totally drown out the still, small, voice with the "fa-la-la-la-la" of Christmas carols. Between the frenzy at the mall and the party at the office, it is easy to get anesthetized, numbed to the true reason for the season.

Have you heard the joke about the young priest who rushes into the pastor's office and says "The Lord has been spotted walking up the aisle of the Church. What do we do?" The pastor looks up with alarm and says: "For God sake, Father, look busy! Look busy!"

Jesus in Mark's gospel makes it clear that it won't be a pretty sight if he shows up only to find us spiritually snoozing. It's not a question, though, of just being busy, but being busy with the right things, busy pursuing God and doing his will.



The Puritans recognized the ways holiday merriment distracted people from the true meaning of Christ's birth. Their solution was to completely ban the holiday and its associated festivities. The Catholic approach is not to ban it but to use it. In the preoccupation with buying Christmas gifts for all of our loved ones, do we remember that he has bestowed upon us a vast array of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 1: 3-9) designed to ready us for his coming? There are the gifts of the sacraments, the treasury of Catholic prayer and spirituality, the rich heritage of heroes and saints, the charisms and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Wouldn't it be great if this year's Christmas list was filled with gifts that would help people unpack God's spiritual gifts, that would actually have something to do with Jesus, whose birth we celebrate? And how about if we disciplined ourselves to precede every visit to the shopping mall with a visit to the Blessed

Sacrament? And maybe as we deck the halls, we should devote at least equal attention to clothing ourselves with the virtues that will please Him even more than the holly and the ivy.

This was originally published in the November 27th, 2005 edition of Our Sunday Visitor (www.osv.com) as a reflection on the readings for the first Sunday of Advent, cycle B

The Catholic Home - Meredith Gould

Want to really make your family's experience of Advent and the Christmas Season extra special this year? Get a copy of [Meredith Gould's The Catholic Home](#) before Advent begins! This book is a treasure trove of Catholic customs and traditions for all throughout the liturgical year, but is especially invaluable as we approach the Christmas Season. This book is a fun read but very practical as well. It's full of ideas for prayers, devotions, and decorations for liturgical feasts and saints days and even provides recipes for holiday foods from all over the Catholic world!



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