

*What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"*

*Mark 13:37*

Advent arrives as the whirl of activity from our Thanksgiving celebrations comes to a close. We have celebrated with family and friends, enjoyed our favorite foods and many of us, perhaps, engaged in the American pastimes of football and Black Friday. The holidays are upon us and the Advent calendar countdown begins.

When we were young, the days seemed like weeks as we scanned the catalogues and watched the commercials, longing for the next best toy or electronic entertainment gadget. As adults, we wish we could stretch the days into weeks, so we can get everything accomplished we have on our lists and still have time to breathe.

What Advent *is* in today's world and what Advent is *meant* to be took a divergent path long before most of us were even born. There was a time when Christmas trees did not get decorated until Christmas Eve, when decorations did not appear in the stores before Halloween. There was a time when Advent really was a time of waiting.

How to bring the true meaning of Advent back into the hectic pace of our days can be more than just a desire. Advent is not what happens around us; Advent is what happens within us. No matter where we go or how fast we are traveling through life, we can center ourselves on God. Standing in unending lines, stopping at countless stoplights, with one deep breath we can be in Advent. In the midst of a long to-do list we can find the peace of God, the promise of Jesus and the hope of our world.