

**1st Sunday of Advent
December 1-2, 2018**

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Living Catholic in the 808: It Is Not Easy to Be "Pregnant with Christ"

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As the material preparations for Christmas are well under way, we begin Advent. It is at time when we are invited to a spiritual preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth. Each Sunday of Advent is a chance for us to spend some time away from the shopping mall so that we might renew our minds and hearts about the real reason for the Season.

As we listen to today's gospel talk about a time of tribulation and a day that will "assault everyone" we might begin to have flashbacks about the turmoil of shopping this past Black Friday! Life, especially when we are trying to get bargains on the most crowded shopping day of the year, can present its challenges. Laboring that Christ might be reborn in our hearts and lives can involve us in strife as well.

It is not easy to be "pregnant with Christ" in a world that wants us to engage in all kinds of unhealthy behaviors that will harm the life of Jesus within us. Advent invites to pray for strength and vigilance.

As Paul reminds us in the second reading today, we need to strengthen our hearts. First of all, we can increase our love for God by taking some extra time during this Advent to pray. This could mean attending our Advent Penance Service or a daily mass during the week. We could spend 15-20 minutes a day reading the Bible and reflecting on it. Secondly, we can increase our love for one another. Perhaps we can apologize for some past hurt that we have caused. Maybe we can call someone who is lonely and invite them to lunch. Or we can really try to make our Christmas gift-giving an expression of our care for others and not just perfunctory.

By strengthening our hearts we will be better able to deal with the turmoil involved in bringing Christ to birth. We will face his coming, not in fear, but with faith. Let's help one another to really celebrate Advent that we might rejoice at Christmas!