

Fourth Friday of Advent, December 24 Christmas Eve

Advent by definition is the arrival of a notable person, thing or event. While we await the celebration of the birth and arrival of Jesus, the weeks beforehand serve as a time of reflection. In today's Gospel, John the Baptist is sending two very important messages, which resonate deeply with me.

As John the Baptist is baptizing a crowd, he says, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." While the messaging of this phrase is self-explanatory, I think it serves as a reminder of the importance of sharing and caring for those who are in need. The holiday season typically comes with many initiatives of giving back. Every business and community uses this time to gather food, clothing, and gifts from willing volunteers to give to those who are less fortunate. I have always wondered why there is such emphasis placed on giving back only around the holidays. It seems like our society believes that there is only a four-week window to share, when really the message from John the Baptist should be applied year round. By working in a public school, I am able to see firsthand that the need to share cannot be narrowed down to four weeks. I do my best to assist families in a way that can be impactful. The impact does not always have to be material, and something as simple as a conversation and interest in the life of a child, who might not be getting that attention at home, can go a very long way.

The second message that John the Baptist is sending, really summarizes Advent and our waiting for Jesus beautifully. John the Baptist says, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." We are taking the time of Advent to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The commercial aspect of the holiday season sometimes clouds the true importance and significance of the holiday. John the Baptist does an excellent job of reminding us of this. We all tend to be caught up in everything that comes with the Christmas season without regard for the spiritual impact. I am definitely guilty of this. This year is different, thanks to my participation in the RCIA program. I am held accountable to really put the spiritual significance of the holiday first, and put my spiritual amnesia to rest.

In conclusion, today's Gospel left me with two very important messages to ponder and apply to my life - the importance of sharing, and the significance of the spiritual aspect of the Christmas holiday. Merry Christmas.

Sign with Holy Name RCIA Candidate Rachel Ferrigan