

# Rejoice—even in an imperfect Advent journey

It's the third week of Advent, and Christmas—which seemed so far off just a few weeks ago—is looming large.

There are gifts to buy and wrap and deliver, cards to send, and a thousand other things to do that probably don't matter that much.

The real question is: Are we ready to celebrate Jesus' birth?

This weekend we went to our parish's live nativity. For the first time, I saw a live Baby Jesus. He was snuggly tucked in the arms of his brother, who was playing Joseph. And I was struck by the beautiful innocence of the reenactment.

It wasn't polished. But it was perfect.

The children's creation of the greatest story ever told was beautiful—even more so because it was genuine and low-key. The children got to be themselves, even if that meant a shepherd was pretending his sheep was talking to the audience. My favorite moment, in fact, might have been when one of the angels yawned.

The images of Christmas are always pristine and perfect in our mind, but we know that isn't how that first Christmas really was. And the memories we are creating today are full of yawning angels. That's just fine. We can and should strive for perfection, but there's something about Advent that carries us closer to Jesus even when we feel we are faltering.

At Sunday Mass I found myself looking at the candles on the Advent wreath—three candles burning strong. Two weeks ago when the priest lit the first candle, the flame fizzled out. Last week, the candle struggled to stay lit through the Mass, but made it. And today that first candle still didn't have the strongest flame on the wreath, but it held its own.

That candle, I thought, is a little like me. I know my purpose. I want to shine bright

for Jesus. But that can be difficult.

Look, though, at all this third week of Advent offers us—and that spark it gives us to continue in our journey.

Gaudete. Rejoice. Let us rejoice. Christmas is coming—so soon. God will become man. Our Savior will be born. We are called to rejoice even if we feel we might be struggling to keep our flame burning brightly.

So let's worry a little less about all those pre-Christmas tasks, shine however we can, and know Jesus will come to us at Christmas, just as we are.

And He will be happy to see us shining, even if we aren't the brightest flame on the wreath. Because He loves us.