

Seize the day this Advent season

Weekday mornings are a blur.

This morning was no exception, as we scrambled to find shoes and backpacks and gloves and coats and lunchboxes.

We were practically out the door when my son remembered that he hadn't done his math homework.

Sigh.

I had mentioned that homework a couple times over the weekend, but around here weekends are for weekend-ing. Those backpacks stayed closed.

"We don't have time to wait for you to do it," I said. "Grab a pencil and see if you can finish it in the car."

Off we ran.

Even before I had pulled out of the driveway, he had worked out a math problem. The next one was done by the stop sign. He announced them one by one, and each felt like a victory. Just before we pulled up at school, he declared that he was finished.

He slipped his homework into his backpack and zipped it up. Then he and his brother jumped out of the car and ran off to school.

Now, I thrive under deadline pressure, and I have to tell you, it was absolutely exhilarating. Were the answers correct? I have no idea. But the homework was complete, and we made it to school on time.

As I drove away, I found myself thinking of this season of Advent. In many ways, these first few days of Advent, it seems that we have days and weeks stretching ahead of us before Christmas. It's easy to feel like a child on a Friday afternoon with a whole weekend ahead of us, Monday morning far in the future, and all the time in the world to get to that homework packet.

But that weekend—and these weeks of Advent—will fly by. All of a sudden Monday morning will arrive, and our homework may not be complete.

The good news with Advent is that Jesus comes either way. He meets us where we are. He is all loving and all good and all merciful. We won't get into trouble if we haven't spent enough time in prayer and reflection and discernment. No one will knock off 2 points if we don't make it to Confession.

But how much more beautiful, how much more powerful can Christmas morning be if we have spent some time preparing our hearts to welcome Him in.

Of course, we are not waiting for Jesus just during Advent. We are always waiting for Christ, and we do not know when He will arrive again. "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." (Matthew 24:36)

So let's not see Christmas as a homework deadline. Instead, let's look at it as a chance to welcome Jesus into our lives in a new way. Then on Christmas morning, we can encounter the Christ Child with our minds and hearts open and ready, our voices singing the Gloria with the angels, and our souls on fire with love for Him.