

What my unborn daughter taught me about Advent

This Advent, I am anticipating the arrival of a little baby. Yes, Jesus, but in my peculiar case, I am expecting another baby in addition to Him. You see, my wife is pregnant, and has a scheduled C-section for December 26.

As the pregnancy drew on, people started to ask: "Are you getting excited?" Until recently, my response was: "Not really. I am too busy to be thinking about the baby." Between my work, my wife's work, driving our oldest son to school, soccer, and everything else, and caring for a 2-year-old, I didn't have much time for contemplating the arrival of our little girl.

It might also have been denial. Part of me does not want to think about the sleepless nights, yet.

Last week, I finished grading the last finals of the semester and attended the required meetings before the winter break. I was finally done with school work, until I return back to work after the baby, and at last, I had some time to mentally prepare for our newest child. My wife and I settled on the name (we couldn't agree on the middle name), and we asked our friends to be godparents. We took the boys to Build-a-Bear to help create a gift for their sister, and we got the baby items (millions of them!) in the right places. Things started to fall in place.

As I focused more time and effort on the baby, I started to get more excited. My anticipation grew accordingly, and it was a great feeling.

Every Advent, I hear homilies and read blogs about making time for Jesus. I know it's true, but I brush it off as the same old Advent message. I never took it seriously until this year.

The past few months, I had the epiphany that I could be too busy to ignore my own unborn child. It is hard to miss my wife's growing belly, and my child's presence is undeniable when she starts the in-utero circus routine every night, just as my wife is about to fall asleep. Even with all these signs in my face, I was too occupied to think about her coming.

It was only when I took time to prepare for her, that her imminent birth became real to me. That is, when I started planning, when I saw the little clothes, when I installed the car seat, and so on. It was these activities that opened my heart to her, and allowed for a joyful anticipation to grow.

The parallel with the coming of Jesus is obvious. We can't prepare for the coming of Jesus, if we are too busy. We can't fully celebrate Christmas, if we don't do anything

in Advent. Every December, we need to get ready for Jesus, just like we would prepare for our own child.

We need to see the signs of his coming birth: the Advent wreath and empty manger scenes. We need to prepare our hearts: with Mass, prayer, and confession. We need to share the message: talk about the coming of Jesus with each other, especially our family members.

The more effort and time we put into Advent, the more our anticipation will grow and the more profound our joy will be on Christmas. That's the lesson my unborn daughter taught me this Advent.