

# The Season of Advent: A Fruitful Time for the Christian Steward

Probably nothing challenges a Christian steward's use of time as much as the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Each year, we marvel at the irony of it: a time to honor and ponder God's great mystery, the Incarnation, somehow falls prey to a time of stressful shopping, endless "to do" lists, strained checkbooks, and guilt over what's not getting done. Sometimes those nonstop Christmas tunes begin to grate on our senses.

How does the Christian steward answer this challenge to devote time to reflection and prayer while incorporating the best and most fruitful of our cultural traditions into this festive season?

One suggestion would be to set aside a special time of reflection right at the beginning of Advent for determining what our priorities for the season will be. Set aside 20 minutes and begin it by rereading the Christmas story in the Gospel of Saint Luke.

- Ask God to help you know what is the most generous and beneficial use of time in God's service during this season.
- Ask for help in setting aside time for prayer each day.
- Don't be afraid to cross things off your "must do" list if they add stress to what should be a peaceful time.
- Ask God which traditions are life-giving for you, and be bold enough to leave the others behind.

Only you and God can determine the best use of your time. For instance, some people find annual Christmas cookie baking a reflective, creative time and a wonderful way to share. For others, it's a self-imposed burden and a sure-fire way to a messy kitchen and a calorie overload. Likewise, that extra party may be just what someone needs to unwind and commune with friends while for another it may be the gateway to exhaustion or a temptation to overindulge in food or drink.

"I just don't have time," is the frequent lament of the holiday season. But the Christian steward is aware that we all have the same amount of time, and to each is given an opportunity of returning the first fruits of that time back to God. The season of Advent offers just such a grace-filled opportunity.