

So --- welcome to Advent: and the beginning of a new liturgical year! Since it is a new year, Advent is a good time to re-focus and to re-prioritize our lives – a time to get rid of some old habits and establish some new ones.

An image that I am kind of stuck with this year is that of re-booting. When I get myself in trouble with something going wrong with my computer – if it has frozen up or it's doing something it normally doesn't do --- I know if I shut it down and re-boot – everything kind of resets itself.

Advent is a good time to re-boot our lives in general – and our spiritual lives in particular.

And the Advent readings are ripe with ideas about how we might re-focus, re-prioritize, or re-boot our lives. That's why we are having you focus on a few of the words that come to us in the readings – before Mass gets started. . . by the way, hold onto that word you chose to focus on – because we will ask you to write it down on a paper ornament after Mass in the gathering area – and those will become part of our Christmas décor.

The Advent readings are rich with imagery. . . and I had such a fun time during Lent sticking with one image every week and illustrating it with a picture – that I decided to do it again during Advent. So. . .

The picture this week is this: [clay being shaped by the potter's hand]

We are the clay, and God is the potter – molding and shaping us. And I just want to ask: are we?? Are we allowing God to mold and shape us: our values, our likes/dislikes, our use of time, talent and treasure --- or are we allowing the world to mold and shape us?

Advent is a real test of such things --- for do we see it as a time of spiritual renewal – of preparing our hearts as a place for Christ to dwell --- or – are we simply counting down the shopping days till Christmas?

For the Christian – the consumerism, the gaudiness, the excesses of our cultural Christmas can be overcome by answering the call to live simpler lives, to use less, to reach out to the poor, to quiet ourselves in stillness rather than grow louder in frenzied activity.

Is God really molding and shaping our lives – or is something else?