

Advent: Back to the Future

The most successful movie of the year in 1985 was the science fiction film *Back to the Future* which told the story of teenager Marty McFly accidentally sent back in time, where he met his future parents. It's a story in which the past becomes the present, and choices made in that past-made-present, based on what is known of the future, reshape the future. Kind of like our observance of Advent. When asked what we are doing and why in celebrating Advent, most people speak of preparing for Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birth in (*O Little Town of...*) Bethlehem some two thousand years ago. But our looking *back* to that historical event is actually for the sake of preparing ourselves for the full coming of Christ yet to be realized in the *future*. We look back to the past with a view to a future reality. Our liturgical prayer and scriptures for the season of Advent all speak of the coming of Christ, and seek to help us prepare to receive Christ fully by both looking back and forward, or more accurately, looking forward and back. The gospels for the first three Sundays of the season speak of looking *forward*, and only on the last Sunday looking *back*. This first Sunday directs our attention to the return or full coming of Christ in the future; the second and third Sundays speak of the ancient Jewish people's anticipation of the Messiah, and John the Baptist's preparing the way of the one they were looking forward to. Only on the fourth Sunday do we look back, to an event that happened before the birth of Jesus, Mary's visit to Elizabeth when both were expectant mothers. But even this looking *back* is for the sake of helping us to look *forward*, because the coming of Christ was not just something that happened back then and there, but is something that continues to happen, an ongoing reality that we are invited, challenged, and privileged to receive and respond to ever more fully, freely, and faithfully. But that requires preparation and readiness. So, welcome back to Advent as we look forward.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.
Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.