In Chapel last week, freshman Carmen Akamine-Alvarez shared, “my favorite color is black because light always comes from the darkest places.” Yesterday marked the beginning of a new year in most churches from the Western tradition. The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word, “adventus,” meaning “coming.” It is a time that we wait and prepare for Christmas. We celebrate this season in hope, peace, joy, and love.

This first week, scripture readings ask us to wake to life’s goodness, to the light shining in the dark places of our lives. Hasty routines promote tunnel vision to complete tasks. Advent calls us to open our senses to glimmers of light, the blessings that peek through dark, busy tunnels. It is time to slow down, notice, admire, and give thanks for the simple yet profound ways God blesses our lives.

Fr. Anthony De Mello, S.J. suggests, “spirituality means waking up. Most people, though they don’t know it, are asleep. They are born asleep, they live asleep, they marry in their sleep, they breed children in their sleep, they die in their sleep, without ever waking up. They never understand the loveliness and beauty of this thing that we call human existence.” This week, scripture readings sound a wake-up call. They tell us that now is the time to start recognizing glimpses of God in our relationships, work, and routine tasks or as Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister writes, “live the ordinary extraordinarily well.”

Many Christians observe Advent through **prayer**, connecting with God more often, engaging in **good deeds** for others, and choosing to **fast** from things which they don’t need (food, material goods, poor decisions, complaining, Facebook, etc.). They do these things in hopes of waking to God’s light shining in their lives.

What we do while we wait for Jesus’ birth is important. Jesus calls us to be aware of that which is most important in life. He reached to others by spending time and energy on personal relationships. He saw the light in those who were hungry, sick, poor, lost, and homeless. He invited all people, especially the outcast, to eat at his table.

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