

**A lot has been packed into this weekend**

**The Feast of the Immaculate Conception on Saturday**

**And the Second Sunday of Advent the next day**

**But isn't that what life is mostly like?**

**We seldom have the chance to space things out according to our liking**

**More likely, things are packed right on top of each other**

**And we deal with it**

**Advent is hopefully a time to take a step back**

**Even in the midst of all the holiday business**

**To look at our relationship with God**

**To see it as it is**

**And to see if we are making the right choices**

**To ask ourselves: is my relationship with God where I want it to be?**

**Awhile back I was reading a story about Jack Nicklaus**

**One of the greatest golfers of all time**

**What really set him apart was his mental ability**

**His ability to concentrate**

**One hot June day**

**He was playing in the US Open**

**He hit into the rough**

**Addressing the ball**

**He stood there**

**Then backing out**

**He said 'That's the wrong swing'**

**But he never even swung the club**

**Being caught on tape**

**Nicklaus confused a lot of people that day**

**But he explained it in his book**

**Before every shot**

**He went through a mental rehearsal**

**First, he would see the ball where he intended it to stop**

**Then he backs up**

**He sees the ball land and how it spins**

**He sees it in flight**

**Then he sees the type of swing needed to produce that result**

**So the swing that was wrong**

**Was a swing in his mind**

**He was able to then make his adjustments**

**And make the right swing**

**This mental rehearsal is our Advent**

**We have a time each year to see our relationship with God**

**We want to be right there, next to him**

**So we step back**

**If that is where I want to be**

**Is my life on the right trajectory to get there?**

**Do I have the right spin on my life?**

**Am I moving in the right direction?**

**What about my address?**

**Am I lined up right?**

**What about the swing?**

**Am I making the right choices?**

**Are my actions and words those of a Christian?**

**Do I need to make swing changes?**

**Perhaps I have hit a shot into the rough**

**Venial sin**

**Or even hit one out of bounds, and have to take a penalty stroke**

**Mortal sin**

**Do I need the graces of Reconciliation to get right with God?**

**Advent is a time to make a mental note of my life**

**Past**

**Present**

**Future**

**Where I have been**

**How I got to where I am now**

**And see where I want to be**

**When we do this mentally**

**We see this is the time to make the changes I need**

**To select the right swing**

**To prepare my heart**

**So I can encounter Christ in a brand new way this Christmas**

**Not just the historical birth of Christ**

**Not just the Sacramental encounter with him in the Eucharist**

**But most important**

**Put my life on course for that final encounter**

**That face to face encounter all of us will one day experience**

**To get where we want to be**

**We have to see reality**

**The world is against us**

**Just as it was against John**

**Look at those stacked up against him in our Gospel**

**Many of the same ones that will be against Christ**

**Caesar, Pontius Pilate**

**Herod and his brother Philip**

**Lysanias, Annas and Caiaphas**

**John saw his path**

**It was not an easy path**

**But a path that led to Christ**

**He desired to follow that path**

**He desired to show that path to others**

**So he became the voice of one**

**Crying out in the desert**

**Making the path straight**

**Filling in valleys and leveling mountains**

**For one purpose**

**Salvation**

**If we fail in the world's sight**

**So did Jesus, John and all the Apostles**

**Pretty good company**

**But if we fail in God's sight, the company is not so great**

**There are eternal repercussions for our actions in this life**

**We can use games as analogies for life**

**But life is not a game**

**Our life here sets the course for our eternity**

**Advent gives us an opportunity to ask yourself**

**What will that eternity be like?**