

“Are we there yet?”

Advent is the long-distance trip of holidays, the season of children repeatedly asking, “Are we there yet?!” It’s filled with great anticipation and excitement, but it can also be filled with tantrums, meltdowns and timeouts.

The problem starts, of course, with the fact that young children do not understand the concept of time. To them, all time, be it five minutes or two hours, is a LONG time. Imagine their confusion when they see Christmas decorations in the mall before Halloween, or the Christmas tree at the neighbor’s house going up in November. All this means to your children is that Christmas is soon. Really soon. Like, tomorrow, right?

Trying to help them channel their energy (and frustration) and, at the same time, impressing upon them the meaning of the season becomes a full-time job for us parents – on top of the shopping, cleaning, planning and cooking. If you are like me, somewhere near the third week of Advent, you are also asking, “Are we there yet?”

Of course, the most important thing is being mindful of what Advent is all about: patience and preparation. During times of difficulty, we pray for help, courage and support. You can also pray for peace and patience during the holidays – not just for the world, but for your household as well.

It is often easier to pray for peace around the world than in our very own homes and families, yet home is where peace begins. Strained family relationships can become more stressed this month, and couple relationships often bear the burden of too much to do and too little time. “Are we there yet?”

As you set up your manger scene this Advent, talk about how Jesus is the Prince of Peace and what peace really means – in our hearts, homes and world. What are some ways we can be a more peace-filled family this season? If there are quarrels in

the family, Christ calls us to try to forgive one another and start again. Talk about ways to minimize the stress of the season so you can continue to foster a loving, faith-filled home.

Advent is a time of waiting. Help your kids learn patience while we await the babe in the manger, who brings the gift of peace to the world.