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Good News!

My favorite songwriter, David Wilcox, wrote a fantastic song entitled “Start With the Ending.” In it, he suggests beginning a marriage by exploring what could end it—difficult personality traits, past romantic travails, constant squabbling—and dealing with those issues up front, before they become marriage-enders. It’s a delightful concept for a song and an excellent way to start Advent.

How do we end Advent? Often distressed that we didn’t get our child this year’s “in” present or frustrated over burned cookies or dreading Uncle George’s visit. We’re stressed out, tired out, and caroled-out before the day even arrives.

So what if we started this Advent with that ending? What if we sought a different Advent conclusion than the usual stress and mess? Our children will survive with fewer but more thoughtful presents. Instead of making ten

**November 27, 2011
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Is 63:16b–17, 19b; 64:2–7 / 1 Cor 1:3–9 / Mk 13:33–37

cookie recipes, leaving our kitchens an unholy mess, we could enjoy a cookie swap. Decorations could be simpler, prayers could be more numerous, and anxiety about difficult relatives replaced with gratitude for having family to celebrate with.

Yet we know we’ll need God’s help to change our usual Advent ending. In today’s first reading, the Hebrew people demand God’s assistance: “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you!” Saint Paul reminds the Corinthians that God “will keep you firm to the end.” As we begin this holy season we, like our Hebrew ancestors, can passionately ask the Lord to keep us firm to the end of Advent, when we celebrate God’s coming among us as Emmanuel.

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