

First Sunday of Advent 2009

WAIT WITH US!

Every Advent, our scripture readings give our sense of time a reorientation. There is a deliberate tension in the next four weeks between promise and fulfillment, expectation and deliverance, between looking forward and looking backward.

Advent is a time of waiting.

Nothing worthwhile in life is sudden. We wait for birth. We wait for love. We wait for life to reveal its meaning, year by year, experience by experience. Waiting is the law of life, the measure of love.

To wait for another person is to be willing to say that the future does not begin until they arrive. To wait together with another is to form a community of hope with them. If we are anything, we are a community of hope.

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah focuses our gaze on the promise God made to David, some 1,000 years before Christ. God says he will raise a righteous offspring of David who will rule with justice. We can look back on Israel's desire knowing that God has already made good on this promise by sending Jesus, his only son into the world.

Knowing that our God is a God who keeps his promise lends great urgency to today's Gospel reading. Many will be sacred to death, but Jesus tells us that we should greet his final coming with heads held high. The son of man will establish God's kingdom, our redemption is at hand.

Advent is the most counter cultural season of all for Christians. The secular world is bent on buying and selling, partying, rushing around and worrying. Psycharitrists tell us that this time of year is the most stressful of all. People worry about all kinds of things, what kind of decorations to put up. What kind of gifts to buy, weather to say Merry Christmas or just happy holidays, who to inviter to Christmas parties and how to pay for the extra expense that they have already incurred. It is a bit i9ronic that we have so much fear and guilt about he birth of the one who cam to take away fear and guilt.

So the church offers us a life line during this season through the great symbols of advent.

QUIET – as opposed to noise. What if each person or each family would take fifteen minutes a day to stop talking, turn off the radio, the TV, read a brief passage from the Bible, a page from the Little Blue Book, or just sit still and spend the time in quiet reflection and prayer.

DARKNESS - December is the darkest month of the year. It can remind us of the darkness and cold in the world without the Jesus Christ, without love. Turn off the lights and light a candle – it doesn't even have to be on the advent wreath, although here are a few left for sale in the gallery of light.

FATSTING as opposed to stuffing (we've had a bit of that these past few days) when we don't open that box of candy or give up dessert once in awhile, we remind ourselves that we have those deeper spiritual hungers that cannot be filled with food. It also helps us to realize that we have control over our desires.

WAITING – Back again to waiting. It is easy to get impatient during Advent. It seems as if we have to wait longer than ever. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could redeem those moments of waiting. If we could start a cheerful conversation with the people in line, offer help to someone struggling with packages, say a quiet prayer for the people in the cars around us. Have you ever stopped to think about the burdens they might be carrying around with them each day.

We can wait in hope, knowing that the Lord we are waiting for is already present in the people we are waiting with. And the purpose of his coming is to make us more peaceful and more loving.

Projects may be hurried; schedules can be accelerated; but life will not be hurried. Jesus comes to hearts patient with hope. Jesus is nearby whenever someone awaits a person or a future worth waiting for.

We must wait to be born. No one is born suddenly. Birth happens to those who have awaited in darkness. Once darkness is touched by the presence of light it grows toward the light. And light dawns unfailingly. As life waits to be born, there is silence and darkness, little

perceptible activity, a certain aloneness. One might suppose that nothing is happening and yet life, the greatest of all happenings is happening.

No life happens without waiting. There is no Christmas without advent.