

HOMILY ADVENT SUNDAY 01 - B (Homily 02)

“Waiting with Faith”

(Isaiah 63:16-17, 64:1, 3-8; Psalm 80; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37)

Two young boys were praying their night prayers, one silently and one very loud, saying what he wanted for Christmas. The other child rebuked him, telling him that God was not deaf. The first boy replied that God wasn't, but Grandma was.

Advent is an invitation to us to wait with faith, joyful hope, repentance and love

The Jewish nation in exile was a little like the boys praying. After 50 years of oppression and a return to desolation, it seemed that God had abandoned them, like God was deaf. They wanted to see God in action, to fix the situation, to take drastic action. “Oh that you would tear open the heavens and come down!” is the prophets cry.

His is a humble acknowledgement of sin and failure on the part of the people. He complains that God's apparent absence is not met by faith but by infidelity. His is a cry from the heart for change, transformation and repentance.

Most of us have felt like that at times. Where was God when this happened to me, some cry? Why doesn't God do something, others ask? We look around and see our society losing ground, letting go of values, turning its back on truth, violence, crime and social unrest on the rise, and we sometimes feel like giving up.

Our problem is not only that we do not wait well, but that many of us cannot wait at all. Noted author Ron Rolheiser OMI tells of encountering a rather sophisticated lady whose problem was boredom. It turned out that she had “done and seen it all” - premarital sex, drugs, alcohol, gambling, travelling, jobs, relationship after relationship, broken marriages. She was jaded, worn out. At the tender age of 30, there was nothing left to wait for, to expect. She had lost her enthusiasm for life. She had not been able to wait for anything in her life, and now there was nothing in her life left to wait for. She who wanted it all right now, complete fulfilment and consummation on her own terms, found herself spiritually bankrupt and empty.

The very prophet who cried out for the heavens to open, is a model for us. Just as quickly as he cried out, he affirms that God is at work in those who wait for him, and reminds us that we are the clay, God the potter. We must be patient, trust, and wait.

The gospel admonition to “Stay Awake” means to wait actively, heads up, eyes open, on our toes. Above all, it means to *be prepared*, actively participating in what is happening around us, and we will be waiting well, with faith.

Deep, active, strong faith in God’s love for us makes the kingdom of God present within us already. The peace we feel, the strength flowing from that faith, enables us to endure, to stand fast, to keep on forgiving, finding ways to love even our enemies, to endure the silence of God.

Those who have faith will have the wisdom and strength to wait, to expect, to be open to the many surprises of God day to day, and finally, that final consummation when we meet God face to face in eternal life. They will be able to put aside and sacrifice their own desires for the greater needs of others at times, for the sake of love, because their faith tells them that there is more, that all this is only temporary, a hint of what is to come. They are able to live in the now, with their eyes on the infinite horizon of God’s goodness.

The core of biblical, advent waiting is to have strong faith, to be open to change and transformation with joyful hope, and to continue to love.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that we have been given the gift of the Spirit. That Spirit in turn gives us expectant hope – Jesus is coming again. Strengthened by the Spirit we are to be blameless at his coming, and continue to enjoy fellowship with Christ, a personal relationship with him, that will carry us through the times of trial and dryness.

In his recent book on the Eucharist, Rolheiser describes the Eucharist as a family meal. Families gather not only for meals on special occasions, but also for meals each day, when there seems to be little to share except the sports scores. But still it is important for families to gather. This is what we do, Sunday after Sunday – we gather to celebrate life, to be with each other, to wait together for the coming fulfillment of God’s promise in Jesus Christ.

So, let us make this advent a time to stay awake; to be alert; be prepared. Pray for the ability to wait with faith, repentance, joyful hope and love.