

1 Advent B 2020 SML  
IS 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7

- ✓ My coworker's been exposed and he's positive, so that means I've been exposed. And I have to wait til Friday before I can even get tested. Then three days for results. Then what? . . . that's Advent.
- ✓ My Dad is in the ICU and we're all waiting for a ventilator to become available . . . that's Advent.
- ✓ The bank account is low, one more month of bills and we're done. When will the economy get back to normal? . . . that's Advent.
- ✓ I ate Thanksgiving dinner alone. I've never been this lonely . . . isolated by this pandemic . . . when will there be a vaccine? . . . some sense of normalcy? . . . that's Advent.
- ✓ All we want is to be assured the next president received the most number of legal votes . . . How long does it take to get the count right? that's Advent.

Waiting, longing, hoping, watching, yearning, expecting. That's Advent, and right now that's what life has been all about.

Much of salvation history has been spent waiting . . . waiting for the coming of Christ.

This morning's first reading from the prophet Isaiah recorded that part of Israel's history after they returned from

exile. Time flew by when the people were unfaithful to God, by:

- ✓ not following His law,
- ✓ taking advantage of the weak
- ✓ and worshipping other gods . . .

But in 587 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar exiled Israel from their land and their temple and their great city of Jerusalem to a foreign land, to the land of Babylon . . . when time stood still.

And while time stood still, in exile, there they sat, wept, waited, longed, and hoped, as they remembered Jerusalem. Psalm 137 captured their lethargic waiting:

By the streams of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion (when we remembered Jerusalem). On the aspens (on the trees) of that land we hung up our harps. Though in Babylon our captors asked of us the lyrics of our songs, and our despoilers urged us to be joyous: "Sing for us one of the songs of Zion!" How could we sing a song for the Lord in a foreign land? If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!

They waited almost 50 years. In 539 BC, their waiting over, a new king, Cyrus, allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. They thought all it would be well when they returned home to Jerusalem. But it was a big mess.

- ✓ They felt dirtied by their sins,
- ✓ shamed by their betrayals,

✓ and justly abandoned to their troubles.

Not only their spiritual lives, but their city and their temple were in ruins. They were lonely for God and lonely for His help, and so they called out to Him (this evening's/morning/s first reading), "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down! Do unheard of wonders! Complete the work of your hands!" In a word, they called upon God to come as their Lord and Savior. And so once again, they were waiting . . .

By the time of the second reading from St. Paul, written several hundred years later, their cry had been heard. God the Son had torn open the heavens and come down! The Virgin Mary conceived, Christ has been born on the first Christmas, worked unheard of wonders and completed God's work through His death and resurrection. But again, the Churches of St. Paul were waiting, waiting for Christ to return again:

We ask you brothers, with regard to the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with Him, not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a "spirit," or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand. (2THESS 2:1-2)

Two thousand years later, and we are still waiting for the Second Coming. Our Blessed Lord has come in His Physical Body. Yet His final coming has not yet taken place, for all is not

ready. And so we wait. But unlike the Israelites who waited lethargically in Babylon, our waiting should be far from lethargic. Our waiting should be far from passive. Our waiting should be active.

Unlike the people at the time of Isaiah, we no longer have to wait for Our Blessed Lord to rend the heavens and come down. That He already did. And that He continues to do, at every Mass, in the Blessed Sacrament. But as Timothy Cardinal Dolan has said, many Catholics have become desensitized to the fact that God is present in the Eucharist and they act as if He is not here. This Advent, let us be re-sensitized that Our Blessed Lord rends the heavens and comes down to us in the Holy Eucharist at every Mass, at our beckoning, at the beckoning of a priest consecrating.

We don't wait as if God is unreachable. Our Blessed Lord is right here, in the Tabernacle, and in a few minutes, on the altar, in our hands, and in our hearts. You can't get any closer to God than that!

Our waiting is also penitential. We:

- ✓ search through our lives for the obstacles to His coming,
- ✓ find them,
- ✓ and remove them.

Try as you might, don't need a show of hands, but how many feel a disconnect, God can't reach you and you can't reach God? I just don't get it. I pray as hard as I can and I feel as if God is not listening or God is not there. What's wrong? Ask yourself. Is there something in the way? If there is, get rid of it. Go to confession. One of the finest blessings of confession is no waiting. The Israelites had to wait 50 years for a king who would allow them to return to Jerusalem. We don't need to wait for anything. Forgiveness is instantaneous. You walk in with all the muck of sin and you walk out in the state of grace.

And realize, that while you're waiting:

- ✓ to get tested
- ✓ to get the results of your test
- ✓ for your quarantine to end,
- ✓ for the vent to arrive
- ✓ for the economy
- ✓ for some normalcy, for some company
- ✓ for the election results to be verified
- ✓ for whatever it is, your "this" that you are waiting for,

Jesus, in the Eucharist, in that Tabernacle, in that Monstrance, is waiting right there with you. He's right here.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, gave a series of sermons on Advent. He pointed out in this series that we are apt to think of Advent as a season that exists “before Christ,” while we exist “after Christ.” But as he says:

It is Advent. All our answers remain fragmentary. The first thing to accept is, ever and again this reality of an enduring Advent. If we do that, we shall begin to realize that the borderline between “before Christ” and “after Christ” does not run through historical time, in an outward sense, and cannot be drawn on any map; it runs through our hearts. Insofar as we are living on a basis of selfishness, or egoism, then even today we are (living) “before Christ.” But in this time of Advent, let us ask the Lord to grant that we may live less and less “before Christ,” and certainly not “after Christ,” but truly with Christ and in Christ: with Him who is indeed Christ “yesterday, today and forever.” (HEB 13:8) Amen.