

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent B (Dec. 6, 2020-STM: 10:00)**

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, today we lit the second candle of our Advent Wreath. The Advent Wreath was invented in Germany in 1839 in order to teach patience. A man named Johann Hinrich Wichern had founded a home for poor children in Hamburg. The children kept asking him how many days were left until Christmas. As a response, he developed the Advent Wreath with its candles to give the children some idea. Wichern placed twenty small red candles and four large white candles inside the ring. The red candles were lit on weekdays and the four white candles were lit on Sundays. Eventually, the Advent wreath was created out of evergreens, symbolizing everlasting life in the midst of winter and death as the evergreen is continuously green. Over time, the wreath developed into what we know it today: 4 candles. Usually three purple and one rose. Sometimes you may see 4 white candles, which is okay too. The main point in all of this: the Advent Wreath was created to teach patience. To teach children the value of waiting, waiting for Christmas.

This virtue of patience is something, perhaps, we all need to work on. Over the 4 weeks, the glow of the Advent Wreath gets brighter and brighter. The flames signify that Christmas is drawing near, that the celebration of Christ's incarnation is approaching. But we are told to wait, to anticipate, to be patient. Most of us are not very good at being patient. I personally suffer from this malady at restaurants mainly when the I have become an invisible patron and no one has taken my order or it seems my food is being prepared in Europe and is in the process of being shipped over. Many of us are impatient in traffic, waiting in a line, sitting in that little room in the doctor's office, or perhaps, even here at church waiting for the homily to end. Any one want to admit to that? No? Good. Patience. We all can use a dose of it.

Advent presents us with the themes of patience and of waiting. 2020 has tried to teach us a lot about patience and waiting. We have had to wait for things like COVID-19 test results, waiting for kids to go back to school, waiting on stimulus checks. Some have waited on loved ones who have in the hospital. Others have waited to be able to see family in nursing homes. We are waiting for when we do not have to wear masks any longer. Now we wait for the vaccine to be available. We are finding out who will get it first. We are waiting for aspects of our lives to return to some sense of normalcy.

Maybe all of this is meant to teach us something. I said last week that God cooperates with history. Maybe we are meant to use this time to understand more and more what it means to wait on the Lord. Maybe we are being taught to have a little more patience. Maybe we are being taught that things do not happen on our time. Yes, these 9 or 10 months have been teaching us something, as bad as this virus has been.

In this week to come, we have the great example of Mary. On Tuesday we celebrate the Immaculate Conception and on Saturday we celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas. (Saturday is also the anniversary of the dedication of the this church). In Mary we how she waited on the Lord patiently. She trusted that God<sup>1</sup> was working in and through her. From the very moment of her conception, Mary was set aside for a specific purpose: to be the

tabernacle of the Lord, to bring Christ into a waiting world. And in the image of Guadalupe, we see the pregnant Madonna, waiting for her son to be born. Mary is this great example for us of joyful hope, patience endurance and ultimate trust.

How can we model Mary in practicing patience? Perhaps we can focus on three main areas:

- ❖ First, Be patient with others
  - We all have people in our lives who drive us crazy. Maybe they have quirks that could send us to insane asylum, or their work ethic does not live up to ours, or we do not agree with their habits or lifestyle or whatever it is. In response, Fr. Ed Broom writes: *Be humble in the midst of your dislike of this person who drives you up the wall due to the many defects that you observe in him. Remember and call to mind your own defects, which might be more serious in the eyes of God than those of the person that you really cannot stand! God loves the humble but rejects the arrogant and proud. When tempted to look down on this person, call to mind one of your most egregious failures or sins and God's mercy towards you. This will help you to be more compassionate, kind, and patient toward this intolerable person!*
  
- ❖ Second, Be patient with yourself
  - Fr. Broom says: *The Founder of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, Venerable Bruno Lanteri expressed in two short words, and these two words say it all: Nunc coepi, meaning now I begin. In other words, after we fall or fail in one way or another, we should get up, dust ourselves off, launch ourselves into the loving arms of God the Father and simply start anew! We should trust more in God's grace than in our human weakness remembering the words of the great Apostle Saint Paul: When I am weak, it is then that I am strong!*
  
- ❖ Be patient with God
  - So often we want to determine how and when God should act. We sometimes do not get answers to prayers on our timeline or wonder why God is not acting in our world according to our timeline. Fr. Broom says: *For an infinite and eternal God, the past, present, and future are all the same. This being said, for the sake of our conversion, sanctification, perseverance in grace, and eternal salvation, God's plans and decisions will not always meet with our criteria. However, we must believe in God's loving and providential design! All God does for you individually, personally, socially, and spiritually is always—in the broad and panoramic perspective and in the light of eternity—for your good. Therefore, strive*

*never to be impatient with God but trust Him, trust totally and humbly in His infinite love for you and providential care.*

Advent patience is what we all need. I know many of us are under stress in some way right now. At home learning with kids, trying to get ready for Christmas, stress from work, perhaps the burden of caring for elderly parents. Advent invites us into the patience of God. We are invited to hear the words of the prophet today: "Comfort, give comfort to my people." As the light of our Advent Wreath grows, may we come to know true patience with others, with our self and indeed with our God who has come to save and set us free. Amen.