

Patiently Waiting for God Fr. Leo

In this first Sunday of Advent, we're going to be invited to participate in these readings. That's going to give us a little bit of an outline for how we're supposed to approach the entirety of the Advent season. I'd like to first begin with the prayer, the collect the opening prayer for the first Sunday of Advent. And the word collect is what is used for this opening prayer. It's to help us literally collect our thoughts. To help us to recollect, why are we here? Because every prayer doesn't begin with the name of the Father. No, it begins with intention. And as a universal family, our Catholic faith is trying to give the entire Catholic family an intention collecting our thoughts, our hearts, and our minds and our soul so that we can stay focused. Which by the way, is one of the more important topics for this Sunday's readings.

So, we pray, *In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Amen. "Grant your faithful we pray all mighty God. The resolve to run forth, to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at His coming. So that gathered His right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever, Amen."*

One of the things that strikes you is this idea of resolving to run in haste to meet the Christ child. So, if we were to take a look at the readings, you're going to see the same type of need for hurrying. This idea of being attentive and making sure that we are watching and praying. Because people who run to something it's because they're excited for it. And let's just admit that people in this day and our age in this time of the year, they're all excited, but for what? Well, obviously they're excited for presents. They're excited for the Christmas season because in this time of the year, everyone is nice to each other in a way. But really what we need to be running towards would be perhaps the same haste with which the three Magi, the three Kings from Orient are so to speak, they were looking for Christ child. And they were coming from a very long distance and every day counted. And they were in haste. And let's admit something in this time of our year everyone is busy. But for what?

If it is not to encounter Christ more deeply and personally in your life, then perhaps, and I'm glad that you're listening to the conference. We need to take a very important spiritual Maxim to heart. It is this, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi." It's a Latin phrase that means the law of prayer. "Lex Orandi" establishes the law of belief, "Lex Credendi." And I always take it a step further and say, if you really are praying this and your intention is there, then it's going to affect what you believe. And if it affects what you believe, Lex Credendi, it's going to affect how you live, Lex Vivendi. How are you truly living your life? Are we in haste to meet Jesus?

Because in the Eucharistic liturgy, the documents of the church "Sacrosanctum Concilium" are very clear in saying that you meet Christ in four perfect ways. The most important way is obviously in the Eucharist, the sacrament par excellence. And the second way that we meet Christ is through his sacred ministers. The sacred priesthood. He's the one who started it, and it is through them that the Eucharist comes. The third way that we encounter Christ is in God's Holy people. And that's one of the big struggles though. We sometimes look at the people sitting next

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to us and it's really hard to see God in them. And I think the reason is because we are not looking at them with God's eyes, because we might not see God in our life. So, the more you see God in your life, the more you're going to be able to look at others with Godly eyes and see the presence of God in them. And the fourth way that Christ is present to us is obviously in His sacred word. So, I wanted to give you these principles before we just jumped right into Scripture. Because a lot of times people treat this as just like a Bible study and it's just information. But my whole organization, Plating Grace is all about providing opportunities for formation. How were these words not just things that we kind of memorize and kind of can spit out? No, it's to form us. What is this trying to do?

So, we take a look first and foremost at the Prophet Isaiah, who is an incredibly powerful figure in not only the Advent season, but also the Lenten season, why? Well, listen to what he says in this Isaiah Chapter 63, "he speaks away, speaks about how our hearts can be hardened and he's asking to return for the sake of your servants, the tribe of your heritage. Oh, that you would tend the heavens and come down with the mountains quaking before you to rend the heavens, excuse me, and come down." We're waiting, we are in a process of literally waiting for God. And then it says one of these most beautiful things, beautiful quotes, "No ear has heard, no eye has ever seen any God but you doing such deeds for those who wait for Him."

So automatically you see the process of waiting as a necessary part of this Advent season. And for this time of the Advent season, I know people right now are incredibly impatient. They want to open up their gifts, but they got to wait. By the way, this idea of waiting patiently is not going to be easy. In fact, it hurts. And that's why the word patience comes from the Latin word *pati*, which is literally the verb that means "to suffer." It's the same root word as patients, people who are in the hospital. Because what are they doing? They're long suffering. They're waiting for this healing. They're waiting for the divine physician to come.

And if you were in the hospital and you were waiting for the doctor to come, and all of a sudden you see the doctor walked through, that is going to be a very happy face to greet. Interestingly enough, this is what the Psalms tell us, "Lord, make us turn to you, let us see your face and we shall be saved." This is almost a comfort for a lot of mothers, especially in the era where we can now see through a sonogram, what a baby's face look like. And it's beautiful to know that a mom's suffering with the birth pains and with just the labors the one thing that keeps her going is just seeing that face of a child in the sonogram. And if we are to take our faith seriously, our job is to patiently wait for God to reveal His face to us. And for the people of Israel, the chosen people, they had waited for so long wandering in the desert for 40 years. And then of course, generations after generations, they were waiting for a savior. And in the fullness of time, God is going to show his face to us. And this is key, because in the Old Testament, you know that if you were to see the face of God, it would be like death. That's why Moses had approach covering his face. So that if you look at the face of God, we call it the beatific vision, that means you're dead.

But in this case, Jesus is going to turn it all around and when we see His face, what are we going to see? The cute, adorable face of a baby who pulls out of us unconditional love. And what kind of unconditional love are we talking about? Well, we've seen it very clearly in the second reading from St. Paul's letter to the people of Corinth. We see a love that will keep us, and it says here, "He will keep you firm to the end, irreprouchable on the day of the Lord Jesus. God is faithful,

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and by Him you were called to fellowship with His son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And therefore, if we are truly steadfast, you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you" and it says here, "Wait for the revelation of the Lord, Jesus Christ."

You see this time of the year while everyone is incredibly impatient, even though when we're all supposed to be in a good mood, go ahead and wait in a really long line for a sale. And you're going to see how people... And my gosh, we've experienced it so much already in our recent past. People have grown very impatient because they're looking at each other, not with Godly eyes and therefore they can't see God's presence dwelling in the other person. Thankfully, we have Mark's gospel to literally sum it all up for us perfectly. Here are his words. "Be watchful, be alert, you do not know when the time will come. It's like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work and orders the gatekeeper to be on watch. Watch therefore, because you don't know when the Lord of the house is coming. Whether in the evening or at midnight or at cock crow or in the morning, may He not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all."

Watch, wait, pray. We hear this reflected in Christ's desire for Peter to stop falling asleep in the agony in the garden. Couldn't you stay up with me an hour? And so, while this is certainly a time when we become incredibly busy, what are we busy about? Are we kind of rushing to materialism? Or are we rushing to see the face of God and live? Very interesting Psalm because is this again is inviting us to a beatific vision. I think a lot of us do not rush to see God face to face in heaven. We almost want to create heaven on earth. And that's just certainly never going to happen because we're all going to die. But hopefully we'll be able to face God and say to him, I recognize you. I recognize you in the sacraments, in the ordained ministries that you created of the priesthood. I recognize you God, in my brothers and sisters and the people of God. I recognize you God in your Holy Word. And the Word of God is telling us to be patient.

We get it, waiting stinks, but I guarantee you this, if you pray for patience, God might actually just put you in a traffic jam. Or put you in a parking lot with a lot of people around, someone stealing your space. God might put you in a very long line where people are complaining, just so that the cash register can hurry up and finish the sale. Or God might put you in a situation where your family is going to be struggling. Or God might put you in a situation where you want to rush through mass. But the end result of that is kind of forcing God's hand.

Our job in this Advent season and reflecting on these first set of Sunday's reflections from these readings is to grow stronger in our virtue of patience. It's not going to be easy, but good things, in fact, eternally, good things come to those who wait.

All Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end, amen. God bless you and go in peace. Thanks be to God. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.