

Preparing the way for the Lord: Second Sunday of Advent; Mark: 1:1-8 December 6, 2020

I recently read a letter from a pastor who said that while he was in the seminary, he taught a class on the history of the Old Testament to prisoners. One evening while he was waiting for a prison guard to come and check him in, he noticed a man waiting in line ahead of him who was fidgeting and constantly checking his watch. The young seminary student thought that man needed a tranquilizer. Finally, the guard came. The man hastily scribbled his name in the visitors' book and rushed inside. What does that man do, the seminary student asked. The guard answered: "**he teaches a course on serenity through meditation.**"

The story struck me as an image of many of us at this time of the year. We sing of silent night, peace on earth, joy to the world. At the same time, we rush around frantically, doing ten things at once while we're mentally trying to figure out how we're going to do the next ten things on our list!

Last week our Lord told us to be watchful, to be alert, to be ready for his coming, not his coming as a baby, but his coming in glory at the end. After I made some suggestions last week of some spiritual things people might do during Advent, I thought perhaps I would see lot of new faces at morning Mass or Holy Hour! But that was not the case. I know not everyone can get to Mass or Holy Hour, but hopefully more people are spending some extra quiet time at home reading the scriptures or praying or maybe more people are doing some extra good works.

Today the scriptures give us a similar message: "prepare." *We all know we won't be ready for anything important unless we prepare.* Maybe we're already ready to meet our Maker, I hope I am, and I hope you are too, but maybe there's a little room for improvement in a few of us.

Advent is a time of waiting. It is not passive waiting like when we were students in school, and we kept looking at the clock waiting for the school bell to ring. It is active waiting, like a recently married husband and wife expecting the birth of their first child, trying to get ready for the great event.

Christmas is a day we must prepare for in a spiritual manner if we want to experience the spiritual joy of God's great love and be more ready to welcome his future coming. Otherwise when Christmas day ends, we'll be saying to ourselves: "Boy, am I glad that's over. Christmas will be for any of us only what we make of it. It is true many of us do hate waiting. Whether it is waiting in line, waiting for a package to be delivered, or waiting for a prayer to be answered, waiting is not something we usually enjoy. What we sometimes forget is that there is a great deal of wisdom in waiting. This is why Advent is so important. **Advent is a good time to learn about waiting because this season is all about waiting well.** For the next few weeks, we sit on the edge of our seats waiting for God to come to us in Christ and transform our lives with his love. In this process of waiting for Christmas, Advent teaches us lessons about why God sometimes makes us wait. Many of us never learn the wisdom in waiting because waiting is not always fun. That's why our culture is built around preventing this dreaded task — fast food, faster internet, faster delivery, faster service, call ahead seating, no waiting! We send a text and we love getting a text back instantly! We go on the internet and we love shopping and buying with one click. We can find a book we want and press one button and boom it is downloaded and so is our credit card! Sometime back the *New York Times* published an article stating that we will visit a website less often if it is slower than a close competitor by a quarter of a second. That's .25 seconds! That's way too long for any normal person to wait! We don't like to wait! We want what we want now! We don't like to wait. We think it is a waste of time. We are always rushing to the next place or the next thing. We don't like being held up. This carries over into our spiritual lives. We want instant answers to our prayers. We want God to respond quickly to our needs. We want God to provide for us within our time frame and schedule. Advent is the time for us the put aside the rash and wait for Him who is to come at His own time and who when is late is always still on Time. Amen.