

# Waiting Well

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## Confident Desperation

There are some things in life that we have to wait for. Waiting is usually not a problem when a person isn't particularly desperate or heavily invested in "the Thing" they are waiting for. But when one is overwhelmed by the desire for something, then we can experience a certain frustration or powerlessness while we wait. The natural inclination one might have is to just try to "care less", but the Christian life is marked by "caring more". We are called to desire more. But we are also called to desire the Right Thing. This Advent can be marked by increased desire; a confident desperation that Christ comes into the parts of our lives and hearts where we have not yet allowed Him to enter. We cannot do this through our efforts alone, it requires grace. Our part is giving God permission to increase our desire to love Him as much as He can possibly be loved by our hearts.

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## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever longed for something? It doesn't have to be something "great" or "worthy"; it could simply be a present for Christmas or the return of a loved one or for some event. How did you spend your time while you waited? Did you distract yourself? Or prepare yourself?
2. Have you ever felt absolutely powerless over a situation? In the cases of the kids and their Halloween candy or (on a much deeper level) the situation of minorities in the South or our fellow Catholics in Northern Ireland (who often turned to the same behavior or worse) out of sheer desperation and anger. What did you do? What would be a wise thing to do in those situations? Why don't people usually react wisely?
3. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI pointed out that God loves us with "desire". This is communicated to us when, from the Cross, Jesus uttered the words "I thirst". He thirst for us. He longs for us. Christ desires us. He is desperate for us. Are most people desperate for Him? Why or why not? What are something that kill that "confident desperation"? Do you notice any of these things in your life?
4. We are not called to pretend like Christ hasn't already come into the world during Advent. But it is certainly a reality that there are parts of "our world/hearts/lives" where we have likely not let Jesus enter. What are some obstacles to His "access" to these areas of our lives?
5. It would be an incredible grace to be able to love God as much as He possibly could be loved by our hearts. Have you ever prayed for this grace? Are you willing to? Why or why not?

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## God in Real Life

- I. Saint Teresa of Avila uttered the famous lines, “pray as you can, not as you can’t”. This week, are you willing to approach God as you are? We don’t need to be good to approach God or to call out to Him. In fact, the People of Israel called upon God because they *weren’t* good...but they realized that they needed *His* goodness. When you pray this week, you are invited to pray relying more intentionally on God’s goodness and desire for you than on your own goodness and desire for Him. As you approach Him like this, you will find that you begin to share His goodness and desire.

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## Be Transformed

The Bible reveals God’s desire for His people:

- A. In the Book of the prophet Jeremiah, God speaks through Jeremiah about His love for us and desire to heal and care for us. See Jeremiah 24:6-7 and Jeremiah 33:3.
- B. Psalm 139 is a profound and popular Psalm revealing God’s presence, knowledge, and love for each individual. Note the fact that God *knows* each person. He doesn’t merely “generally love” people in the abstract; He knows and loves individuals in particular. God know you and your need...and loves you as you are.
- C. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI wrote, “True, eros tends to rise “in ecstasy” towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing.” This reveals that authentic *eros* (the love of desire) is not about what one can grasp, but is intimately connected with a certain kind of selflessness and the ability to say “no” to one’s self.

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## To the Heart

“I will look after them for their good, and bring them back to this land, to build them up, not to tear them down; to plant them, not to pluck them out. I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the LORD. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:6-7).

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From *Deus Caritas Est*:

Fundamentally, “love” is a single reality, but with different dimensions; at different times, one or other dimension may emerge more clearly. Yet when the two dimensions are totally cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or at least an impoverished form of love. And we have also seen, synthetically, that biblical faith does not set up a parallel universe, or one opposed to that primordial human phenomenon which is love, but rather accepts the whole man; it intervenes in his search for love in order to purify it and to reveal new dimensions of it. This newness of biblical faith is shown chiefly in two elements which deserve to be highlighted: the image of God and the image of man. (#8)

First, the world of the Bible presents us with a new image of God. In surrounding cultures, the image of God and of the gods ultimately remained unclear and contradictory. In the development of biblical faith, however, the content of the prayer fundamental to Israel, the Shema, became increasingly clear and unequivocal: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” (Dt 6:4). There is only one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who is thus the God of all. Two facts are significant about this statement: all other gods are not God, and the universe in which we live has its source in God and was created by him. Certainly, the notion of creation is found elsewhere, yet only here does it become absolutely clear that it is not one god among many, but the one true God himself who is the source of all that exists; the whole world comes into existence by the power of his creative Word. Consequently, his creation is dear to him, for it was willed by him and “made” by him. The second important element now emerges: this God loves man. The divine power that Aristotle at the height of Greek philosophy sought to grasp through reflection, is indeed for every being an object of desire and of love—and as the object of love this divinity moves the world—but in itself it lacks nothing and does not love: it is solely the object of love. The one God in whom Israel believes, on the other hand, loves with a personal love. His love, moreover, is an elective love: among all the nations he chooses Israel and loves her—but he does so precisely with a view to healing the whole human race. ***God loves, and his love may certainly be called eros, yet it is also totally agape.*** (#9)