

Waiting Well

What Are You Waiting For?

When we have to wait, we hate to wait. But it is something that all of us have to do. Have you ever stopped to ask why? Why are you waiting for whatever it is that you are waiting for? More to it: what are you waiting for? During Advent, the Church gives us a season for waiting, but what are you waiting for this Advent? This must be personal. This must be something that is true in your life...what is it that you are waiting for this Advent? Until you know what you are waiting for you won't know what it is that you are getting ready for. Often, we just go through the motions when we pray or worship or read the Bible, but if we knew what we were preparing for, it would change the way we prepared. We would be more likely to do something excellent or become excellent. When we prepare well, it is the same thing as "waiting well".

Discussion Questions

1. Are you good at waiting? Describe a time when you were able to wait well...and describe a time when you found it really difficult to wait.
2. Would you describe yourself as someone who struggles with procrastination? If you do, why do you think that this is the case? What is the "thing" that holds you back from "pulling the trigger" on projects or decisions? If you don't procrastinate very often, what's your secret?
3. What is one thing that you are putting off doing right now (that you ought to be doing)? Are you able to act on it IN ANY WAY today? Are you willing to let the other members of your small group hold you accountable to doing what you can do today? Why or why not?
4. People often feel like they are "going through the motions" with their relationship with God. Have you ever felt like this? Do you think that having a "thing" like a goal or a target or a "something you are waiting for" would help you break out of that? Like the priests of the Old Testament in the Temple, do you find yourself offering what's left, and not your best?
5. Preparing with a specific goal in mind looks an awful lot like "waiting well". What is your specific goal? What is your next step?

God in Real Life

1. Catholic Christians are not known (by the world) as those who "live the impossible". But the actual history (and current reality) of many of our older brothers and sisters (the saints) reveals a different story. Because of God's grace, the saints have been able to live extraordinary lives. They didn't do this on their "own steam", but by cooperating

with God's grace in a real way. As you move forward into the second half of Advent, having named "the thing" you are waiting/preparing for, you are invited to do this by "cooperating" with God's Presence and work in your life. This can be as simple as breathing a prayer entrusting yourself to God's care each time you practice the impossible.

Be Transformed

The Bible reveals waiting well and the heart of preparation:

- A. The prophets were constantly calling Israel back to deeper interior (and exterior) worship. The people would often simply offer "surface" gifts/sacrifices, and wouldn't go any deeper. See Joel 2:13 or Hosea 6:6.
- B. Saint James writes about the necessity for taking action when following God. This action transforms us and the people around us. See James 1:22-27.
- C. The virtue of "patience" is connected with "fortitude". Francis Cunningham noted that, "If we reflect upon the number of times each day that we are confronted with situations, persons and things that displease us and make us sad, we can see how often patience is needed It is important because it prepares the way for the practice of all the other virtues. Virtuous action is usually difficult and likely to cause sorrow on the sense level. Patience, by moderating the emotion of sorrow, removes one of the serious obstacles to the practice of the other virtues. All virtues owe something to patience, and no one can long follow the path of virtue without it."
- D. What is more, Saint Thomas Aquinas said this about patience: "A person is said to be patient ... because he acts in a praiseworthy manner by enduring things which hurt him here and now and is not unduly saddened by them." And: "Patience is one of the humble, workaday virtues; but it is, in a real sense, the root and guardian of all virtues, not causing them, but removing obstacles to their operation. Do away with patience and the gates are open for a flood of discontent and sin."

To the Heart

Saint Peter, in speaking about waiting for the future promise, wrote:

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love. If these are yours and increase in abundance, they will keep you from being idle or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

“Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like. But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does.

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, his religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:22-27).