

## First Sunday of Advent - Year B - Dec 3, 2017

Thank you for calling us today. Your phone call is VERY important to us. So, please stay on the line, and someone will be with you shortly, momentarily, quickly, before you know it... I dread it. I hate to wait...and that dreaded message that attempts to make me think that I won't have to wait...And so, I wait, and wait, and wait, hoping sometimes beyond hope, then all of a sudden there is noise at the other end, and, expecting to hear a human voice, all I get is a dial tone, and know that I have to start all over again.

Well, Advent, which we begin today, is all about waiting. The gospel uses the word "watch" four times and wait is used twice in the other readings. Watch for the Lord, wait for the Lord, and, like being on hold, we do not know when the Lord will be there. Unfortunately, rather than waiting for Lord, many have turned to looking elsewhere towards something more interesting, something more gratifying, something more stimulating, something that is better than just waiting for the Lord.

To appreciate Advent, we need to recognize that we have lost the skill of reflection. In our moments of not being busy, the shrill of an instant message, the beep of incoming email, and ability to google and find answers at heart throbbing speeds have replaced our ability to contemplate, to reflect, to ponder, and to marvel. I was speaking with a research librarian a while back and jokingly compared her to the analog version of google.

Advent and eventually Christmas are focused on the marvelous, the unimaginable, the untouchable. Yes, we love to explain. We want our religion to be reasonable. Like so many others, I love to explain, to reason, to clarify, and to prove. Our humanity wants answers. We don't like to be on hold, but rather we want answers, and not just any answers, but the answers we have sometimes predetermined.

But, when we deal with the divine, we need an additional set of tools. We don't stop thinking, we don't cease to investigate, but we must include the additional tool of wisdom. A vast gap exists between knowledge and wisdom. We sometimes think that they are the same. Knowledge is the analog version of wikipedia with all of its accuracy and all of its foibles. Wisdom dictates what we do with that knowledge. Knowledge without wisdom is like a bank account without

interest. Our religious goal in life focuses on high yields and not just fractions of a percent.

Constant access to information and sources of knowledge is not a substitute for wisdom. In fact, this constant access to information can draw us away from seeing true beauty, productive wonder, and peaceful contemplation.

The gospel says: "Be watchful, be alert for you do not know when the time will come!" These words are not intended to scare us. Rather, they invite us to work daily, to engage seriously in the life God has given us, to look forward to something even beyond our wildest imagination. However, how can we pretend to think beyond the "right now" or how can we imagine a God whom we do not really know? Sometimes, we are like telemarketers in relationship to God. Our prayers are like a sales pitch to some unknown entity. We make the pitch and hope that the person at the other end will buy in and give us what we want.

So, this Advent is an opportunity to rediscover the value of waiting, of contemplating, of looking for what is not right here. Sure, we may be on hold for a while. It may seem as if we are listening to elevator music. However, the one who waits expectantly for God now and into the future will experience a different kind of Christmas, a different kind of life, and I guarantee you, that person will never get just another dial tone.