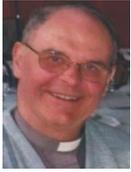


Readings Isaiah 63: 16-17, 64: 1,3-8; Corinthians 1: 3-9; Mark 13: 33-37



Fr Michael says:

Watchfulness and Readiness!

We enter that wonderful time of preparation for the whole Plan of God's Salvation of us through HIS Son, Jesus! We savour key moments in that journey of new insights and directions to explore and develop! They are enriched with our Christian understanding of this journey. Isaiah helps us do this, as he makes a plea for renewal of spirit in God's people and Paul reminds us of the role of the Holy Spirit as we make this move forward. The key here is readiness and watchfulness. To live with and in the present: knowing how to savour it, relish its invitations and recognise how Jesus is made flesh already in us, through these moments: He is only really present in the one that we are actually living: we learn from the past, to open ourselves to the future, as we bridge the two with the present.

How do we ensure that this is indeed the reality: to some extent we need habits, but it is so easily possible to become a creature of habit? Only the very young escape this – it is said that we spend the second half of our lives, according to the habits we have created in the first half! That's fine if we have good ones, but what if we have formed bad ones?

Repetition is the key for this process: it is a good and necessary discipline, as we learn the piano or acquire other skills in life: "practice makes perfect!" we say. Some things need to be second nature to us. They can sustain us in difficulties and enable us to live through challenging times. Nelson Mandela has written: "To survive in prison, one must develop ways to take satisfaction in one's daily life. One can feel fulfilled by washing one's clothes, by sweeping a corridor..."

However, we must beware the negative side of habit: we can get into a rut, without our personal involvement, our heart is not on what we are doing – it can be soul destroying! It can close us down to the beauty and wonder in our world and what surrounds us. We can so easily turn inwards, we can get used to anything – we can become "institutionalised." We can be like a frog, which we put into hot water, it will jump out, but if we put it in cold water and warm that up, it will stay as it is! Advent is our jolt! Time to review who, what and where we are! This applies not just to our lives of faith, but also to our lives lived in relationships with others, at home, work or wherever we are. Let us open our lives and hearts to the Spirit and invite Her in.

We say, "where there is life, there is hope" – we can strengthen this meaning in reverse – while there is hope there is life. Hope is strength, it sheds light into despairing hearts to inspire us to live. It is a doctor's most powerful ally; a shield against defeat and failure. It revives ideals and renews dreams – as long as there is hope, no situation is impossible. Advent calls us to wait in joyful hope, for the coming of our Saviour – it is He, who is our hope!

Reflection for 1st Sunday of Advent year B 2014



Fr Tom says:

We live in an instant society, where the more quickly we are offered things the better. Once we had to wait to get back to our computer before receiving and answering emails. So they made laptops and enabled us to take our computers with us, but this wasn't good enough either, so they made smart phones and we can now receive and send emails almost instantaneously. When do we get time to reflect, to ruminate, to wonder and explore what we have received?? When?

One upon a time we only received particular foods at Christmas – apart from Christmas puddings of course. Today we have no such luck, you can get strawberries all the year round and citrus fruit whenever you want, even turkey is available all year round – much to the chagrin of the Turkeys! All our expectation, dreaming, desires and wishes are gradually being eroded, stolen from us and destroyed; why? Because we want what we want, now!

But there comes a time in life when we just have to stop and think. Am I in control of my life or has my life been taken over by supermarkets, gadgetry, the market? What has really happened to my freedom of choice, true wonder, and my dreaming? We now go on holiday just to get away from all this insistence of instantaneity, to be free – (this will only happen if you leave your phone in reception and only access it when you leave or in an emergency.)

Unfortunately, like many words whose meanings have been sabotaged or adulterated. **Waiting** is looked upon as an evil (all right, the NHS is trying to restore the balance!!) But, far from being an evil or bad, waiting is rich in those qualities we crave for: Patience, reflection, pondering, awareness, discovery, understanding, insight, innovation, renewal – in fact the list is much, much longer.

Advent offers us an opportunity to restore balance to our lives. But, I warn you: if you truly enter into the spirit of waiting you will want more and more of it, as you feel your lives slowly but surely being enriched.

What are we waiting for, you ask? The answer to that is entirely up to you. All I can say is that it is not about gadgets, decorations and food but about a person, yes, Jesus Christ, but it is also about you!! What do you expect at the end of this waiting? What kind of peace, what gifts do you want Jesus to bring you? Spend time on these questions and the gadgets, food, decorations and gifts will take on a much richer and profound meaning! This offer is exclusively available only through waiting.

From Gregory of Nazianzan: *Orationes* 1.5;

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become divine for his sake, since he for ours became [human]. He assumed the worst that he might give us the better; he became poor that we through his poverty might be rich; he took upon himself the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; he came down that we might be exalted; he was tempted that we might conquer; he was dishonoured that he might glorify us; he ascended that he might draw us to himself, who were lying low in the fall of sin. Let us give all, offer all, to him who gave himself a ransom and reconciliation for us.