

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT



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'Waiting'...

As we are now in Advent our thoughts turn to the coming of Christmas and all that this entails. This requires waiting as we have four weeks to go. We can learn much about ourselves if we examine HOW we wait. Is it with Joy? Is it with trepidation and anxiety about all the things that we have to do? Maybe it is with longing to see family and friends, or do we just put it out of our minds as after all it is four weeks away still?

As Christians it is also, of course, a time of pondering what it is that we are going to celebrate...We remind ourselves of what 'The Coming of the Messiah' means to us and the wonder of his birth and infancy. This year we remember especially all those caught up in the conflicts in the Holy Land and beyond, in places such as Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Maybe we can reflect and pray for peace, as we welcome the Prince of Peace into our heart.

Waiting... is at the heart of this period, but waiting in general is part of our daily lives. Today when many desire instant achievement, success or instant service of any kind and bemoan even the slightest delay we see waiting as a bad thing and we are quick to point out any delays or even get angry or disgruntled at the wait.

But let us look more deeply at the purpose of waiting and why sometimes it is actually a blessing. There are many examples of incidences of delays saving lives. We hear of people who were getting angry at having to wait for a train or flight and complain at the waiting only to realise that had they been on a flight, or such like, they would have been injured or killed. How many times has waiting resulted in a change of direction or plans only to find that much good has come out of it because of a chance meeting or a solution to other problems by a chance encounter with someone?

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Much harder are interior 'waitings' for a change in circumstances... How difficult it is to wait for an improvement of some kind in our lives. There are so many examples where 'waiting' can become a really demanding time for us. This is especially true of those who are ill, and improvement seems to be slow in coming or is unlikely to occur. It is even harder when we are looking after someone close to us who is ill. This is especially true when there is perhaps a terminal diagnosis and waiting for what seems to be the inevitable outcome looms large in our everyday and cannot be altered. This is a deep challenge, for how we deal with this, can bring us comfort and peace and a blessing even though it is accompanied with a grief and sorrow.

Another example is the reality of living with hope of a change in circumstance in our relationships with others. Family breakdown today is on the increase and both adults and especially children suffer the consequences. Waiting and hoping for resolution or better times can cause us much anxiety. Many parents wait for that 'prodigal' to return. Many wait for a call or some news of a lost one. With so many wars, many live in dread of any news and waiting can become a torture. How many parents and grandparents hope for a return to faith and belief of their families?

Waiting is therefore not just an inconvenience but an important aspect of our lives. What can we learn from waiting? First of all, that with all its difficulties, waiting can be a time of reflection and most importantly of trust in the Lord's providence for each one of us. Because we tend to expect instant results, even to prayer, we forget that He alone sees the whole picture and the blessings that we seek will be granted to us... but maybe not just yet, and that the outcome will be better if granted in His time, not ours. Sometimes looking back, we can realise this and catch a glimpse of His care but often we just

Christmas Blessings love and prayer to all people this Christmas who wait in Joyful Hope...

give up or complain. Waiting can also bring us 'breathing space' and a chance to consider all the options open to us. How many mistakes are made in haste? We can also gain wisdom and acknowledge the fact that what we supposed is missing is actually not that important and that if we just leave it be, other more important things can be dealt with... and be replaced by better. Waiting can also lead us to surrender all that is not that important in the scheme of things and lead us to a deep peace and calm. This of course requires faith and courage, but it outstrips anxiety and fear in the reward it brings.

There is a passage for scripture that says this in another way... Consider that our present sufferings are not comparable to the glory that will be revealed in us. ***"The creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God"*** (Roman 8.19) One day all will be revealed to us that those who are God's children will be made manifest. While children are not always patient, they are often resilient and adaptable...

How could we also not mention Our Lady Mary in the context of waiting...patiently. Before she conceived, she would have been taught to wait for the Messiah. Like any mother she would have faced the joy and anxiety of what was to happen to her given the circumstances... and yet let us see what she did with the waiting. She made a long journey to visit her cousin Elizabeth as she might have needed her help, but she also wanted to share her joy. Her waiting was filled... it was not empty with false hope and panic... She trusted and waited and slowly all things were revealed to her...

Let us also look at Simeon. One of the most beautiful examples of waiting is brought to our attention in his life. An old man, a Rabbi, he had hoped and dreamed all his life of seeing and encountering the Messiah. So deep was his trust that he recognised Jesus when Mary and Joseph came to present Jesus to God in the Temple. His words are some of the most beautiful in Scripture and so rich in example.

"Now Lord you have kept your promise, and you may let your servant go in peace. With my own eyes I have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all people. A light to reveal your will to the gentiles and give glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2. 29).

So in the many challenges that we face today in the various circumstances of our lives... the Lord will provide the answers if we wait and ponder, serve and trust in His providence, the grace to do so will be given. Just ask... Halina Holman ©

Pope Francis

I am always wary of decisions made hastily. I am always wary of the first decision, that is, the first thing that comes to my mind if I have to make a decision. This is usually the wrong thing. I have to wait and assess, looking deep into myself, taking the necessary time. Rome 2014...

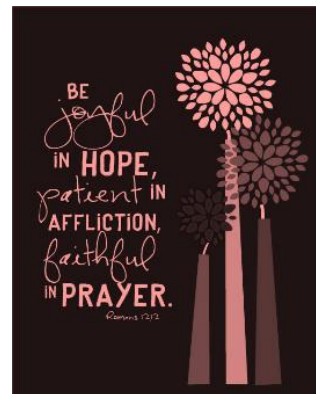
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Prayer

'Where people suffer there is darkness.

You are Light of the World Lord Jesus,

Help your people to find a resolution to all wars and conflict at this time.'



Feast Days in December

3rd First Sunday of Advent

4th St. John Damascene

6th St. Nicholas

7th St. Ambrose

8th Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

10th Second Sunday of Advent

12th Our Lady of Guadeloupe

13th St. Lucy

14th St John of the Cross

17th Third Sunday of Advent

21st St. Peter Canisius

24th 4th Sunday of Advent... Vigil of Christmas

25th Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day)

26th St. Stephen, First Martyr

27th St. John, Apostle & Evangelist

28th The Holy Innocents

29th St. Thomas Becket

31st The Holy Family