

Who Likes to Wait?

Anyone like to take their groceries to the longest check-out line? How about choosing the line at the bank where the customers ahead of you have bagsful of coins? Does a snail's crawl traffic on the expressway or a two-hour wait in the doctor's office make anyone's day? In this fast-paced day of instant everything nobody likes to wait. But in the season of Advent, that's exactly what we are invited to do.

In contrast to society's frenzy of busyness—shopping for bargains as the Christmas countdown begins; attending and hosting holiday parties; baking cookies; decorating; writing cards; finding and wrapping the “perfect gift”—the Church says, “Slow down, be still, linger with the miracle that is unfolding before you—God is in your midst!”

Advent invites us to a different kind of preparation, an inner readiness to recognize God at work in and with us. “Prepare the way of the Lord” the hymn urges, “and all people will see the salvation of our God.” This kind of preparation is not comfortable or easy for us. It's not about doing or achieving, but being still and “knowing I am God.” (Psalm 56). In fact, it seems almost counter-cultural, kind of like forgiving rather than exacting revenge. Yet that is what we are called to do.

The scriptural readings for this season are full of anticipation and trusting God for an unknown or even a seemingly impossible future—a virgin will conceive and bear a son, a wizened childless old woman is pregnant, a grizzly-looking prophet announces that the Messiah is coming.

But like the Jewish people who had been yearning and preparing for centuries for a Messiah of their own

understanding, an earthly king who would vanquish their enemies and restore them to world supremacy, we too have difficulty in accepting that God loves us and really wants to be with us in the ordinariness of our daily lives. There's a story I once heard that gives hint of God's desire to be with us:



There once was a man who lived in a house with large glass windows overlooking a beautiful lake. One evening he was relaxing by the fireplace looking out over the lake. Suddenly he saw a flock of birds swooping nearer and nearer, heading right for the windows, and crashing into them. He went outside and tried waving his arms at them, urging them to change course. Still they continued to crash into the window. “If only I were a bird,” he thought, “I could show them another way.”

Could our God be like that man longing to guide us and show us how to live this wonderful gift of humanity we have been given? Could it be that God has a heart longing for us, wanting to be received and involved in our often messy lives?

What would happen if instead of rushing this Christmas season, we chose waiting and lingering with the reality that God took on our flesh, knows what it's like to be human, and is truly with us, if only we see? What a joyful celebration of Christmas it would be if through this time of anticipation and being with God we came to a deeper understanding of what it means when we pray, “Come Lord Jesus, come and be born in our hearts!”

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate