



Homily for 11/28/2021

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

First Sunday of Advent, Extraordinary Form  
*Wait on the Lord in Your Neighbor*

We have something good to offer here. Here we not only propose the answer to the questions of every human soul. Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? Is this life all there is? Is there something more? We also answer these questions by the exquisite and real presence of the very beauty and mystery that is the answer: Love incarnate. This takes place through stimulating intellectual understanding, surrounded by sensual aesthetic and deep sentiment. Head and heart combined in a sumptuous and delightful feast of faith – God, the highest and the greatest, that-than-which-none-greater-can-be-thought, the first cause, the unmoved mover, wrapped in swaddling clothes, suckling at the breast of a virgin mother, watched over by a faithful and just man, surrounded by flock animals at their feeding trough, because there was no room at the inn – summed up in a name, God ... is with us: Emmanuel. Our heart is drawn to love the innocence, simplicity and tenderness of a child, and our head is made to realize that here lies my origin and my end, the alpha and omega – the one who says I AM . . . even as he says, I AM, for you. This same mystery is extended when the great I Am says I AM bread for eating, and the mysterious object of every human civilization's basic instinct for worship says, I AM blood for offering. I AM your food, and I AM your redemption. What a true feast of faith we are preparing for!

But how do people come to the feast? They need an interface. They need a waiter.

Most people go to a restaurant for the food cooked by a chef. But in order to obtain what the chef in the back is offering, you need an interface – the waiter. What a curious name for this position. Sometimes we call him a server. But let's stick with the traditional term, waiter. We shouldn't be confused by the listless and loitering connotation of this name. This person's job is not simply to wait idly by, doing nothing. No, this waiter is active, eyes scanning the table and the people seated there, anticipating needs, interpreting the menu for clarity, representing, in an active way, the art of the chef who remains hidden behind closed doors, but whose aromas waft through the room and is the ultimate reason the person is there. The waiter is not idle, he is active in service of the chef.

As we begin our Advent, our time of preparation for the Feast of the Incarnation, we hear the theme of waiting for the Lord presented very clearly: From the introit: "None of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded." (Psalm 24) This same verse is repeated in the Gradual. It will be repeated again in the Offertory. Three times it is repeated as if to say, Wisdom, be attentive!

The overarching theme of Advent is one of waiting. However, this is not meant to be a passive waiting, like someone waiting on a bus or a waiter on his smoke break, but rather the active waiting of a server at table. Idle waiters are useless. Attentive and active waiters are valued.

What kind of waiter are you? And yes, you are a waiter, a server at the banquet of love, not just a diner. As with all things Catholic we are both/and. Both invited guest and also sharer in the host's ministry of hospitality. Discipleship is all about first being fed and then, in turn, sharing the abundance and riches with the least among us. If all you do is partake and never share, you have eaten and drunk unworthily. You assumed the bread of eternal charity to be about self-fulfillment. It is rather about self-gift as the fulfillment of your heart's desire. You were made for love. And we are supposed to become what we eat – fed by the self-gift of the self-giver, that we might become what we were made to be, love itself. And love, true love, is defined for us by the author of life as total self-gift. This is summed up as the greatest commandment: Love God with all your heart, mind and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. Wisdom, be attentive! If you come to Mass merely with blinders on, to idly wait for your share and leave without your cup overflowing to your neighbor, you have missed the point of your call. *Ite Missa Est* is not a pious dismissal, but a great commission. You who have feasted are now hired into the vineyard to be co-workers in the truth. The truth is that you are loved with an everlasting love, that this love is infinite and capable of



incorporating every soul of every creature through all time and space – yes, even ‘that’ one – and that this love has chosen you to be the interface of love to your neighbor, the stranger on the street, ‘that’ one, the soul most in need of His mercy. Here we discover anew the answer to all our longing that we are made to be loved, and therefore, to love. Stop trying to love God, and let Him love you first; then go and do likewise. This is the meaning of life. This is the mystery of faith. Open your heart today to let Love with a capital L enter your heart and burn away all other lies of self-hatred, anger, pride, bitterness, and confusion. Then, once loved, wait on your neighbor with the same love. When you did it to these least of these, you did it to me. (Matthew 25) “None of those who wait on the Lord shall be confounded.”

I have presented this year as my theme for the parish, “Evangelization as Invitation”. Active waiting as a disciple is as simple as inviting someone to come to the feast. You don’t have to be the one to cook the food – you just have to be able to vouch for how good it is! Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. You just have to invite your neighbor to sit at table to enjoy what you have partaken of. You know what to do simply from the Golden Rule, “Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.” Don’t leave the guest at table too long without coming up to them and making an introduction. There is nothing more discouraging than going to a restaurant, and the waiter never comes to you. So many are discouraged when they hear of the great mystery of faith offered here, and there is no one to interact with them to better partake of this feast. Our parish has discerned as part of our mission to be a parish full of actively engaged, invested, and committed followers of Christ living the fullness of the Catholic faith. One concrete way this takes place is the way we interact with each other as we come through these doors. If God loves us with an infinite love, why would we not want to share that with our neighbor? How do you share this if you haven’t even introduced yourself? If you go to any restaurant in town, you will see that there is a labor shortage, not enough people to wait on the people who come to eat. The same has been true for us too. We have the best menu in town, and our chef is, quite literally, divine! The harvest is plenty, but laborers are few. This Advent season, I invite you to wait on the Lord in your neighbor. Be attentive; the feast is prepared; you will not be confounded.

May Jesus Christ be praised!