

The Good News

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Advent: a Season for Waiting

Editor: The following article was adapted from Peter's recent sermon.

In the December issue of *Boston Magazine*, there is advice on how the highly successful can make this season more meaningful: workout in a gym; get your nails done; have a massage; do some yoga, talk about your stress with a professional; and do your holiday shopping and cards early.

Success is measured by how busy a person is. And the list in the *Boston Magazine* was all about doing more and getting more. There was nothing in the article about being still and quiet, and waiting.

In our society the more important you are the more you shouldn't have to wait. If credit is good a person can use the Fast Lane transponder of the Massachusetts Turnpike; business class travelers move up to the front of the line at the airport, are the first ones on the plane, first to get a drink and the first off the plane. In this *Jiffy Lubed* culture, there is same day service, one-hour delivery and instant messaging. Important people shouldn't have to be on the bottom of the waiting list. Waiting is inconvenient, inexcusable and aggravating.

As Bishop Stendahl reminded us several years ago, "We are not accustomed to waiting in this society, which celebrates Christmas a month early."

But waiting is what Advent is all about. The church calendar year begins with the often repeated mantra of Advent: "Don't just do something! Stand there! Be still and quiet and know there is a God."

<p>The church calendar year does not start with something that is celebrated, like Christmas or Easter, but rather with something we <i>expect</i> to happen by waiting and wondering.</p>

In the Northern Hemisphere it is appropriate that Advent comes during a time of year of increasing darkness. We observe Advent after the harvest of much doing as winter approaches and we can hunker down and settle in. This is a fallow season and a good time for waiting.

This summer I was reading a book entitled "Place," which talked about how and where we live affects us. One of the interesting findings was that depression in December was more prevalent among newcomers to Alaska than it was to the indigenous population. Natives observed a time change of shorter days and colder weather as a call to do less.

That does not work in a world governed by the business of more and more.

Our nearest neighbors in the rectory are the stop lights and commuters who honk their horns impatiently when traffic doesn't move at the intersection of Concord Street and Washington Street. One of the measurements for the top ten most livable cities in America is how long it takes to honk a horn if the car in front doesn't move when the green light comes on. In Seattle it takes over a minute, and on the corner of Concord and Washington Streets, it is two seconds.

Several years ago I quoted an article that likened Advent prayer to waiting. “Waiting at a traffic light irritates us because we can’t make it turn green. Waiting for an appointment annoys us because we can’t speed up the clock. Waiting for the trolley or plane bothers us because we can’t control its movement.

There are similarities between waiting and praying. In praying, like waiting, we are no longer in control. God is in control when we pray. In praying we give up a part of ourselves to God. We let go of our own self-determination and accept God’s.

And so the church year begins by waiting on God. Our starting point for this new year is to make room for God in our lives. We are to live with that pregnant anticipation of Mary who knows that we are not in control; we are in God’s hands.

In the Gospel Jesus tells the disciples not to be calculating, it is not up to us to predict the time. We are to live in the present, in the now—vigilant, yet relaxed. Jesus says, “Do not be preoccupied with tomorrow for the day is sufficient unto itself.” He uses a wonderful paradigm. Noah is the epitome of what it means to wait attentively and patiently.

We cannot predict the weather, when it will rain or stop raining, but we can wait for God’s call and direction in life. The Latin meaning from which we get the word “minister” means *to wait*. In recent weeks there have been beautiful days for walking with our two terriers. The youngest has at times been unruly, all over the place and running around in circles and anxious, but during these walks there was attentiveness, balance, and a sense of peace as they waited calmly with great joy for direction.

We begin the church year reminded of our “creatureliness.” We are reminded that it is God who initiates and we who respond. When there is a cessation from much doing, there is an opportunity for us to listen to that still small voice the Bible talks about. We gain serenity when we allow God to act. In Advent we hear lessons from the Psalms about waiting on God. In Isaiah it says the reign of God comes with peace and quiet. New Testament messages tell us the time is drawing near.

*O God of peace who hast taught us that in returning and in rest we shall be saved,
In quietness and in confidence shall be our strength;
By the might of Thy Spirit lift us, we pray Thee to thy presence, where we may be still and even know
that Thou art God. Amen.*

—Peter Chase

Stewardship Matters

Editor: The following thoughts continue our practice of sharing testimonials on stewardship from parishioners:

We’ve heard testimonies about how St. Mary’s affects the lives of respective parishioners—testimonies about fellowship and worship. I also subscribe to those feelings, but I want to share how this physical place, the building that houses our church, affects me.

This building *supports* our programs, *sustains* our worship and *represents* our church to the community. We often reflect on how St. Mary’s founders would react to the church today. They would see that much has changed, but they would also recognize that the simple architectural beauty of the place and the core values remain.

The beautiful bronze plaque near the door, reminds us of the founders' names. The building reminds us of their commitment, their skills and their gift to us of this special place. It follows that it is our role as stewards of St. Mary's to preserve this building for our successors in the church and the community.

—Tom Holtey

New Way to Make a Gift Using Your IRA!

Through December 31, 2007, individuals 70 ½ and over may rollover up to \$100,000 a year from a traditional or Roth IRA directly to charity without incurring tax liability. The rollover counts towards the IRA holder's annual minimum required distribution. Donors do not receive an income tax deduction for IRA rollover gifts. For more information, please consult your financial advisor.

Reminder about Church Envelopes

Following tradition, church envelopes for 2007 will be available in the narthex On Christmas Eve to those who have returned their pledge cards. Please use this reminder to send in your pledge cards.

Upcoming Events

Music for Advent and Christmas 2007

St. Mary's is observing the season of Advent with several special music services. On Sunday, December 2, the SWEA Choir (Swedish Women's Choir), directed by Eva DiLascio, sang traditional Swedish carols for the First Sunday of Advent at the 10 a.m. service. The SWEA Choir was joined by members of the St. Mary's Choir in a joint anthem, "Dotter Sion," sung in Swedish to a tune by G.F. Handel.

On Sunday, December 9, the Adult and Junior Choirs led a "Service of Advent Lessons and Carols." The scripture readings for the service were a series of Old and New Testament lessons which outline the story of salvation, beginning with the Creation in Genesis, moving to the prophets' foretelling of the Messiah, and culminating in the Annunciation and Birth of the Savior. Interspersed with the readings were hymns and carols which illuminate the scripture texts. Guest musicians Deborah Fabisiwicz, harp, and Andrea Bonsignore, oboe, accompanied the choirs.

As we move closer to Christmas, on the Third and Fourth Sundays of Advent, we will hear musical selections from the "Christmas Oratorio" by J.S. Bach, and Vivaldi's "Gloria," sung by section leaders in the choir.

On Christmas Eve, the Junior Choir and young people from the congregation will present a Christmas pageant, "People, Look East," during the 5:00 p.m. service. Lessons read by the youth will be interspersed with Christmas carols sung by the congregation and Junior Choir. If you would like to participate in the pageant, please speak to Lucille Rossignol or Kirsten Johnson.

The 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service will begin with a musical prelude at 10:45 p.m. The Adult Choir, accompanied by a brass quartet, will sing the "Christmas Cantata" by Daniel Pinkham, a well-known Boston composer who died in December 2006.

Please plan to join us for these festive services for Advent and Christmas.

Poinsettias for the Altar

We plan to carry on the tradition at St. Mary's of decorating the altar with poinsettias during Advent. Parishioners are invited to purchase plants, perhaps in the memory of, or gratitude for, loved ones. Plants may be taken home after Christmas services. Please send a contribution of \$15.00 per plant to the Church office before December 18. Please provide the following information to Denise: name, telephone number, number of poinsettias, and tribute (either a memorial or in thanksgiving.) Checks should be made payable to St. Mary's Altar Guild. (Please do not put checks in the offering plate.)

Adult Forum on Sunday, December 16 Features *Families for Depression Awareness*.

In 1990, Julie Totten lost her brother, who was undiagnosed, to suicide. A year later, after learning about depression, she helped her father get diagnosed for this condition. Seven years ago, Julie formed Families for Depression Awareness to help others understand depression and reduce stigma associated with the condition.

After services on December 16, Julie will discuss the symptoms of depressive disorders and how families can help loved ones get treated. Also, she will introduce *Families for Depression Awareness* and outline how the organization can help families, especially caregivers.

Families for Depression Awareness helps families, especially family caregivers and friends, recognize and cope with unipolar and bipolar depression. The organization provides education, outreach, and advocacy to support families and friends. *Families for Depression Awareness* is made up of families who have lost a family member to suicide or have watched a loved one suffer with depression, with little knowledge about how to help.

Final Portrait Sittings for 2007 St. Mary's Directory on Tuesday, December 18

For those who missed the original schedule, a photographer from Olan Mills will return to St. Mary's on Tuesday, December 18 to take photos for the church directory. For those of you who have not been involved previously, this directory is completed once every five years, and provides a very useful resource—especially for newcomers—to connect names and faces. It also comprises a wonderful pictorial history of our congregation. It is great fun to capture the children in the parish as they mature.

Multiple poses will be shot. You will have an opportunity to select the pose for inclusion in the directory. Each individual or family group who is photographed is entitled to a free 8 x 10 photo and a copy of the directory. You may also purchase additional photos.

Please contact Judy Haycock at 508-359-4413 or hayjudy@verizon.net; Andrea Gordon at 781-237-6668 or the_Gordons@comcast.net; or Beverly Hurney at 617-332-7412 or bjhurney@rcn.com with questions.

The "Ask-It" Basket:

Q: What is a gradual hymn?

A: St. Mary's choir has been leading us in this form of music. The title comes from a group of Psalms which St. Jerome called "canticum graduum" and are characterized by: (a) a step-like progression; (b) the *lifting up* of the heart to praise; or (c) the *going up* of pilgrims to Jerusalem.

Q: What is a fraction anthem?

A: The hymn sung before the formal breaking of the bread, which in all Eucharistic liturgies takes place before the Communion. At St. Mary's the choir has been introducing us to several fraction hymns, especially during the season of Easter. ,

<p>Please note our new email addresses: St. Mary's: office@st-marvs-episcopal.org Peter Chase: peter@st-marvs-episcopal.org</p>

Editor: Tim Green