

First Sunday of Advent (C)  
November 29, 2009

Are you ready?

Advent is about being found ready...so, are you ready?

Are you ready and prepared to put forth your very best for God and for your faith because only your very best will do?

Are you ready to reconcile, to turn back to God, and to turn away from evil and sin with repugnance while committing yourself to always strive for a right relationship with God and neighbor?

Are you ready to detach yourself from every worldly thing that pulls a person away from God such as money, career, or fame?

Are you ready to pray? Now, I'm not talking about saying an Our Father here or a Hail Mary there – even though these are good practices – but, I'm talking about being found in diligent prayer ...prayer that is not lazy or half-hearted...rather, prayer that creates a sense of being completely and totally one with God.

Are you ready to joyfully and patiently wait for the fulfillment of the coming of Christ...the coming that will bring completion to everything and everyone on earth, under the earth, and in the heavens?

Are you ready?

I remember when I was applying to the Design Department at The Ohio State University.

This is a very elite and competitive program and by the time I applied, they had already had a full class.

Nonetheless, I talked with the head of the program and asked for a chance while knowing that if I didn't get accepted, I would have to re-apply the following year.

Graciously, the director allowed me to apply, and so it began.

I started by preparing my very best pieces of art work – drawings, paintings, photographs, models, and more.

I wrote and rewrote my essay: Why I want to be a product designer.

I gathered great references – people who I knew who would describe how hard and good I worked and will work.

I sacrificed many hours, materials, and resources throughout my preparation as well as hand delivering all my work to the director.

And after it was all in, I prayed and prayed and prayed.

I had wanted to be a Design Student at Ohio State so much...but I didn't want it enough to tell God what to do.

In other words, my prayer consisted of God's will being done, not mine. And during my prayer, I waited.

I waited for what seemed like years.

In actuality, I really only waited for about a month.

Finally, I got the call saying I was accepted!

I couldn't believe it...I was going to be an Ohio State student studying Industrial Design at one of the top Design schools in the nation.

Instantly, I thanked God for the blessings He bestowed upon me.

This was one of the greatest moments in my life and I truly believe it would not have happened if I had not sufficiently prepared, sacrificed, prayed, and patiently waited.

And these values, and more, are what Advent is all about.

In Advent, we not only recall that time when God became man, but we also prepare ourselves for the second coming of Christ.

When we do this, when we prepare ourselves, we prepare not only with decorations and gifts and food...but, more importantly, we prepare ourselves spiritually.

And this means that we look back and recognize how our relationship with God has been over the last year.

By doing so, we reflect on all the times when we turned our back to God, all the times we refused His friendship, all the times we acted out of selfish intent rather than selfless...we recall all this and in return, ask God lovingly for His forgiveness and mercy.

The best place we can do this is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation – a sacrament designed and meant for healing, not judgment...a sacrament that instills peace and comfort, not anxiety...a sacrament that shows us God's love, not His wrath.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are given prime opportunity to reconcile with God and are given the strength and grace to turn away from evil and sin in the future.

In addition to reconciling with God, we prepare ourselves for Advent by detaching ourselves from all worldly possessions and re-focusing, in a sense, on that which matters most, namely, our relationship with our brothers and sisters and with God.

In the end, we won't be saved by how much money we have or how successful we were in our careers or even how much fame we accumulated.

Rather, in the end, the only thing that will determine our salvation is our relationship with God and the time to gauge this is now.

Are we in right relationship with our God or not?

If not, what better time than now to make ourselves get into right relationship and adequately prepare for Advent at the same time!

Let's not wait for this, but take advantage of the opportunities before us now!

And one of those opportunities at our disposal, in addition to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, is prayer.

Are we praying as we ought to?

In other words, are we fully entering into prayer as best as we can and not just going through the motions?

I too need to be reminded of this now and then, especially as distractions pick-up and the days get busier and busier.

But, we must never forget that no matter how busy our schedule is, we absolutely must make time for prayer with God.

When we do so, the waiting part won't be so bad.

In fact, we won't mind waiting because we'll be content by simply being in God's presence.

That's the purpose of waiting for the coming of Christ anyways...to wait and to hope so that God will bring us into His presence and thus, allow us to experience overwhelming joy and peace.

May this reward drive our desire to prepare ourselves this Advent by reconciling with God and with our brothers and sisters, by detaching ourselves from all worldly desires, by praying and developing our relationship with God, and by joyfully and patiently waiting for the coming of Christ, our Savior.

Are we ready for this challenge?