



Why Wait?!

by Sr. Maria Marguerite

December 2009

Dear Friends of the Sacred Heart and Members of the 8th Grade Class,

Our instantaneous society deems waiting as counterproductive and burdensome. We are of the age of instant messaging and text messaging. It has become cost and time effective to send e-cards to the pc's and cell phones of our family and friends rather than depending on snail mail. We purchase Easy Pass stickers for our cars and look for the express lines in supermarkets to minimize our waiting. Retailers begin advance marketing of their seasonal lines so early that the calendar seems curtailed and short-changed. Yet our Church asks us to celebrate Advent – four weeks of waiting for the Promised Messiah shaded in purples and the quiet hush of darkening days. Advent – the season where we are called to prepare, not only our homes, but our hearts, for the Christ Child and for Christmas when the mystery of the Incarnation is revealed. To wait seems counter-cultural as we daily encounter the pressure of immediacy and the whirlwind of activity that precedes Christmas in our world.

Waiting, though, has its fruits. Waiting gives us the space to take in life's moments, to reflect on their memory, and to understand their meaning. Waiting enables us to open our hearts to God and to receive all that He wishes to give. Waiting enables us to grow in love and to be more present to one another.

For several years, I taught religion and co-ordinated the 2nd grade Sacramental Program at the Visitation Academy of our monastery in Brooklyn. December would mark a slight departure from our sacramental curriculum so that we might more fully experience the season of Advent and prepare for Christmas. The 10 Commandments, studied arduously in October and November, became the foundation of our Advent practice as the children translated God's laws into acts of love. With Salesian gentleness they strove to hold back a sharp word, cheerfully acquiesce to a classmate, take a little more time in prayer with Our Lord, and the like. These small acts became the straw for the crèche that awaited the arrival of Our Infant Savior. As our classroom Advent calendar marked the progression of December days, Advent candles gave way to Christmas greenery, and the waiting crèche became filled with straw, the children's enthusiasm intensified. The boundless joy pervading the 2nd grade overflowed into the daily moments of my monastic life and I became increasingly aware of Jesus Presence in my days. With the children, my little moments were offered as straw to warm the Heart of God. That year of Advent waiting also evoked fond memories of past childhood holidays where silently Jesus had always been present. The lingering aroma of December baking securely tucked away for Christmas feasting...garlands



of lights strewn across every street....Sr. Cecilia Therese's Friday music practices in preparation for Midnight Mass and our long-suffering wait to reach 6th grade and sing the coveted Silent Night descant...the marvel of the season's first snowflakes...the gentleness and reverence with which my mother broke the Oplatek (Polish Christmas wafer)...the midnight visit to the parish crèche where the crisp scent of fresh pines beneath a frigid star-laden sky filled our hearts with wonder and joy – again flooded my awareness. It is Jesus who is the true Source of all our joy. He inflames our hearts and contributes to the fabric of who we are and who we are called to become. We need the stillness of Advent waiting to discover that our lives are rooted in love, and that it is through the Heart of the Christ Child, we find our Christmas joy. Advent waiting is about Jesus' waiting – Jesus waiting for us and calling to us each by name! Expressed in the words of a well-known hymn:

“I sought the Lord and afterward I knew,
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me.
It was not I that found O Savior true,
No, I was found of Thee....”
(I Sought the Lord – J. Harold Moyer)

We can glean from the 2nd grade that we must enter into Advent with simplicity, openness, trust and joy in the knowledge that Jesus is waiting for us. Evoked by love, our small deeds of kindness and the little steps we take in nurturing our friendship with Him are the straw we place in the crèche. St. Therese of the Child Jesus tells us that even our smallest acts of kindness and love “thrill the Heart of God”. Can you imagine, we are able to thrill the Heart of God! Jesus waits for us in the Tabernacle, at Mass, and at every moment in our hearts. He waits for us to marvel once more, like we did as young children, at the wonders of His love and to spend time with Him. Jesus longs for us and is seeking us as we seek Him!

This Advent, perhaps, you might wish to reflect on how you personally “thrill the Heart of God”. How can you meet the God who is waiting for you. How has Jesus touched your life with His goodness and what, this year, will be your response. What is to be the straw that you will place in His crèche.

Maybe this year your Advent waiting might include :

- ~ Entering the silence of the season

Put down the I-Pod...turn off the TV – spend a few minutes each day with the One who loves you most. Just be with Him as you would your best friend.

- ~ Praying from your heart!

Tell Him what is on your mind, share your day, ask His help. Most importantly, listen, and begin to experience His personal love for you.



~Getting to know Him!

Read Sacred Scripture or some good spiritual books. Let the Gospels come alive and take root in your heart.

~ Sharing your gifts!

Nothing is of greater value or more beautiful than the gift of yourself. Share your talents, your time, your experience, your love with others and receive the peace that only God can give.

Fr. Augustin Belisle, OSB writes in his book, *In the Heart of God*, of our relationship with Jesus: Welcoming life's gift, we open ourselves to the Giver...trusting in life's gift, we return that gift to the Giver....living life's gift, we do not lose sight of the Giver...

To take these words as our own cannot help but thrill the Heart of God and turn our Advent wait into true Christmas joy