

HOMILY

The Third Sunday of Advent *December 16, 2007*

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There was once a woman who was disappointed, who was disillusioned, and who was depressed. She wanted a good world, a peaceful world, and she wanted to be a good person. But the newspapers and the television showed how far we were from such a reality. So she decided to go shopping. She went to the mall and wandered into a new store where the person behind the counter looked strangely like Jesus. Gathering up courage, she went up to the counter and asked, "Are you Jesus?" "Well, yes, I am," the man answered. "Do you work here?" "Actually," Jesus responded, "I own the store. You are free to wander up and down the aisles, see what it is I sell, and then make a list of what you want. When you are finished, come back here and we'll see what we can do for you!"

So the woman did just that. And what she saw just thrilled her. There was peace on earth, no more war, no hunger or poverty, no more drugs, harmony, peace in families, clean air. She wrote furiously and finally approached the counter handing a long list to Jesus. He skimmed the paper; then smiling at her said, "No problem." Reaching under the counter, he grabbed some packets and laid them out on the counter. Confused, she asked, "What are these?" Jesus replied, "These are seed packets. You see, this is a catalogue store." Surprised, the woman blurted out, "You mean I don't get the finished product?" "No," Jesus gently responded, "this is a place of dreams. You come and see what it looks like and I give you the seeds. Then you plant the seeds. You go home and nurture them and help them grow, and someone else reaps the benefits." "Oh," she said, deeply disappointed in Jesus. Then she turned around and left the store without buying anything.

In the second reading, James gives this counsel—be patient.

Be patient, therefore, my brothers and sisters until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and late rains."

You, too, must be patient!"

We are an impatient people, aren't we? If you don't think so, take a little excursion to the mall. See how patient you think people are who are going about their shopping. We are a fast food society. A microwave society. A broadband internet society. We want what we want and we want it NOW. We can't imagine the children of Israel waiting patiently for hundreds of years for the coming of the Messiah. Forty-three times in the Old Testament alone, the people were commanded, "*Wait. Wait on the Lord.*" It is hard to be patient. Sadly, it seems most difficult to show patience to those we love. Our spouse, our children. Perhaps our aging parents. Perhaps our co-workers. When we pray for patience, how many of us pray: Lord, I want patience and I want it right now?

The Advent/Christmas Season is a time when we need to particularly seek patience. This may be a stressful time for many of us. So much to do...presents to buy...parties to attend...family coming...increased traffic around shopping areas. Perhaps you're feeling a squeeze on your finances. Maybe this is your first Christmas without someone you loved very much and the grief has come back all over again. This can be a difficult time of the year and the feeling of stress can cause us to lash out at those around us. Or to ignore them. How badly many of us need patience, especially with those we love.

During this busy season, we need to remember some words attributed to Robert Keeshan, better known to America as Captain Kangaroo.

“A small child waits with impatience the arrival home of a parent. She wishes to relate some sandbox experience. She is excited to share the thrill that she has known that day. The time comes; the parent arrives. Beaten down by the stresses of the workplace, the parent often replies, “Not now, honey, I'm busy. Go watch television.”

The most often spoken words in the American household today are the words: *Go watch television*. If not now, when? Later? But “later” never comes for many and the parent fails to communicate at the very earliest of ages. We give her designer clothes and computer toys, but we do not give her what she needs the most, which is our time. Now she is fifteen and has a glassy look in her eyes. “Honey, do we need to sit down and talk?” Too late—love has passed by.

That would be a tragic thing to happen in our families this Christmas season. Again, James gives these words of wisdom: “Be patient....” And we need that counsel. We need it in our families. We need it in our workplace. We need it in all our human activities and relationships.

What about patience with God? Have you learned that God doesn’t work according to our time schedule but according to his? And sometimes he doesn’t appear to be working at all. But he is. He most certainly is. He wasn’t working according to John the Baptist’s timetable, but he was working.

How about you? Do you feel God never listens to you or answered your prayer? Have you learned to wait upon the Lord?

“Be patient, therefore, my brothers and sisters until the coming of the Lord. . . . Make your hearts firm because the coming of the Lord is at hand.”