

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Dec 20th 2015

The Season of Wait

Today's Liturgy of the Word opens with the Song of Songs, deemed by many to be the most beautiful love song ever written, ever heard. It is a poetic song delightful to the ear and visually enticing. Both the lover and the beloved sing of true love's longing. Each sings of the anticipated joy at the prospect of being together. But, they must wait. It is not yet time. The beloved is hidden, "...in the secret recesses...". The lover pleads, "...let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and you are lovely." The song is of earthy joy, longing and desire. The lovers can hardly contain themselves. The longing in Wait.

The gospel story is a mirror image of the love song. It is the love story that exists among Mary, her older cousin Elizabeth and the babies they carry, Jesus and John (the Baptist).

Just imagine the young girl Mary skipping, running, flying, leaping "like a gazelle" through the hill country on her way to be with Elizabeth whose baby is due. Elizabeth's time of joyful expectancy nears fulfillment. Elizabeth has waited many long years for her promised child. Mary, young and newly pregnant is full of Love and joyful expectation. She has only months not years in wait for her fulfillment. Imagine their greeting - sweet tears of joy running down their cheeks. Each one reaching for the other while awkwardly maneuvering their arms around Elizabeth's swollen belly. Their mutual longing is gratified. The delights in Wait.

The Love Mary carries blesses Elizabeth who is "filled with the Holy Spirit". Elizabeth cannot suppress the thrill she feels "... the moment the sound of your (Mary) greeting reached my ears (my) infant (John) leaped for joy". Elizabeth reverently sings the praises of Mary and the infant (Jesus) she carries. "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." In their sisterly confidences there is unbridled joy in the midst of longing and waiting. They dwell in the fullness of wait for the fulfillment of the promise. The joys in wait.

The love song and the love story are lived experiences of joy, longing and desire – the lived experience of Wait. The season of Wait, the experience of Wait(ing) is not merely in preparation for something or someone. Wait is its own season. Wait has a fullness, a significance, a meaning of its own. The church season of Wait.

Witness the joy and desire in Waiting. Waiting itself is a rich experience. It is not always a joyful time, can be challenging, but always a rich time. There is a fullness and identity in the Wait. Waiting is not just a preparation time prior to some thing happening – life or death, but a gift in itself – to be held, relished, tended within the relationship. The Wait that Mary and Elizabeth share, the Wait of the lovers, the Wait of expectant parents, the Wait of Mary and Joseph. The Wait shared between the expectant mother and the infant she carries. Wait rich in invitations and offerings.

In these last few days of Advent, of Wait, as preparation and anticipation begin to mount, what is God offering me? What is it within my unique intimate relationship with the Lord that God wants me to receive, to enjoy, to savor? What have been the gifts, the graces, the blessings of this year's Wait?

May God's gifts, graces and blessings of the Season of Wait bless all my seasons.

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