

## Waiting for the Lord

Sometimes married couples do not fight, but they send jabs to each other's way to make a point. A very religious couple was having a "discussion" concerning an item on the "honey-do list." (For those not aware that is a list of chores that a wife wants her husband to do as in "Honey, would you please take out the trash?"—That is a "honey-do" item.) The typical response is that the husband gives an expression that the work will be done. One such couple was having such a discussion in my presence. She asked for a job to be done. He responded that he promised it would be done. She then asked when? He being a religious man responded, that he was like God and fulfills all his promises. She accepted his answer. It is too bad that I was present because I replied, "Remember it took God thousands of years to fulfill His promise to Adam and Eve to send a savior."

The Jews in the Old Testament were constantly waiting for God to act. The time of the judges was when the people would sin, a punishment would come upon them, and the people prayed to ask God for forgiveness. God would send a judge who would not only solve the problem but let them know that God was with them and forgave their transgression. The time of Judges passed, and the Prophets became the sign of God's presence among his people. This was an important part of Jewish life. That is why John the Baptist was so important. It was two hundred years that the Jews were waiting for a prophet to speak and show that God was with His people, so when John was preaching, a message consistent with the other prophets of repenting and reforming, they knew God was with them.

Of course, the two hundred years before John, many people had been born and died. People were starting to worry that God had abandoned His people. This was not the first time it happened, and so we find the same advice in other sections of the Scriptures. King David wrote in Psalm 130, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and I hope for His word." In Psalm 119, he writes, "My soul longs for Your salvation ... My eyes long to see Your promise. When will You comfort me? ... How long can Your servant survive...?" A generation later, Ecclesiastes (9:11) notes with a touch of anguish that we know our time is limited, but we do not know how much time we have. "Human beings no more know their own time than fish taken in the fatal net or birds trapped in the snare; like these, mortals are caught when an evil time suddenly falls upon them." Most of the time we are not conscious that we are closer to death than we think. Sometimes an evil time which we knew was coming can bring something good. A mother knows that she was endure pain in giving birth to a child, but a newborn will enter the world, which will cause her joy and worry. Sometimes when evil comes, evil remains, such as when one hears that they have terminal cancer. Whether good or evil comes, in the meantime, all we can do is wait.

Isaiah, the one who foretold the coming of Emmanuel, "God

with Us," and the virgin shall bring forth a child, told the people how to wait for the good news. (40:31), "They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on eagles' wings; They will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint." When it is dark, and the only light in the tunnel is an oncoming train, remember that Lord had made promises of salvation to His people out of His love for each and every one of us. We walk in hope, and what we do is as our Lord taught us, "Thy will be done." Trust that the evil that befalls us is part of the divine plan and just keep on going because God always triumphs.

One example held before us is Mary, the Mother of God. She waited in the Temple as a young girl for her vocation. She was betrothed to Joseph for a year. He, according to the Protoevangelium of James, was supportive of her remaining a virgin. Then the angel appeared to her while she was at prayer, and everything changed. Her life and world were altered in a way that she could have never imagined. She was waiting upon the Lord, but she did not expect the Annunciation. Then she had to wait for Joseph to decide whether he would take her into his home (marriage), divorce her quietly and send her off to live someplace else, or to turn her over to the authorities, who would probably have her stoned. Here she was an example of waiting in turbulent times. Then Joseph listened to the angel and was willing to take her into his home. While all pregnant women wait for the birth of their child, for many, it is a turbulent time involving morning sickness, aches, pains, and having weight in front that throws off balance and making rising difficult. Mary's turbulence included having to leave home and travel to Bethlehem. This was only the beginning of problems. The Holy Family had to flee to Egypt and then move to a new place called Nazareth. Jesus was staying behind in Jerusalem. She then was with him when other members of the family wanted to throw Him off a cliff. The most significant problem for any mother is to be present when her child dies. Not only did He die, but a horrendous death. Many wonder why God did not take it easy with Mary. God did not even take it easy with His Son, who, as the heavenly Father, watched His only begotten Son die on the Cross with the marks of a scourging on His back, a crown of thorns pushed into His scalp and nails piercing His body. If God did not take it easy on His Son and the Mother of His Son, why should He take it easy on us?

God waits for us to be with Him in heaven. We here on earth, wait to join our heavenly Father. The Jews waited for the Messiah for thousands of years. Their waiting involved not only forty years in the desert, but times of persecution and times of prosperity. Ecclesiastes (known for his "there is a time for every purpose under heaven" quote) notes: "God has made everything appropriate to its time, but has put the timeless into their hearts so they cannot find out, from beginning to end, the work which God has done." This is a nice way of saying we wait, we watch,





and then at God's time of choosing, we see His work and His intention. All the good times and all the bad times are there for a reason and part of the plan. We may be too close to see it, or we will not see it until the distant future, according to the prophet Habakkuk. So we live lives in turbulence as we wait.

For those in the military, an expression which is relevant to Christianity, is "Hurry up and wait." We have to do something immediately if not sooner and then wait hours to do the next step. We desire to rush through our childhood of place to go to school. We desire to rush through school so that we can go to work. We rush through work so we can retire. This is the timeless that Ecclesiastes spoke of above. We move so quickly and

then we complain about the time that we are not rushing because we sense that we are not doing anything. All the time is God's time. We are given it as a gift. Sometimes, we use the time to work and sometimes we are told to wait and both are times with God. We need to look at our day by stepping outside of the time. We need to spend time in contemplation of the day of where God was moving in and through our activity. Not just look at the day but look at the day as part of a whole of our life and in terms of the divine plan.

The Church realizes that we try to rush through everything. So the wisdom of the liturgical year is that we are forced to leave the rush and focus on waiting for God to act. We have Phillip's Fast and the

Great Fast, where we wait to celebrate God's action in the world. It is a time also to look at Mary when she waited for God to act in the midst of the turbulence of her life. It is then a time for us to be like Mary: watch, reflecting how God has worked in our lives in the past. Then we wait for God to touch us. He touches us in the Feast of the Nativity with a God who loves us enough to become a child wearing swaddling clothes. Again, He touches us in the Resurrection with a God who loves us enough to be crucified. Yet, He rises above all the turbulence of the universe with the Resurrection. He is showing us the way in love to eternal life. We just have to wait for it. \*

*Fr Jonathan Morse*

\* Here's something interesting. One of the most popular cell phone apps in the Health & Fitness category is an app called WeCroak. WeCroak costs 99¢. Its only purpose is to pop a reminder on your phone five times every day that you are going to die. Do you need a reminder like that? That's what aging is all about, isn't it?

*FrJM*