

WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

One of the things I don't like to do...well, to be honest I actually hate doing...is waiting in traffic! It drives me crazy (pardon the pun!) to be sitting in my car, in bumper-to- bumper traffic. Nothing is moving. I have learned over time to catch myself and now I say a prayer just in case there was an accident.

Similarly, I also recall times in my life when I went with a group to either Great Adventure or Action Park (remember that?) and waited in line, in some cases for over an hour or even two. Of course, since there were people around, I had to appear nonchalant and unbothered. The other part of that experience is that after waiting in line for a long time, you finally get on a ride that is over in about one minute! Certainly, there are more serious problems in life, but the truth is I don't like waiting around, especially when there's no way of knowing what the reason is or how long the wait will be.
This week we begin the season of Advent, and guess what its theme is? Waiting! There are other words that more accurately capture the true nature of this waiting: joyful anticipation, hopeful expectancy, and desire. The problem with ordinary waiting is that it is boring and serves little purpose. The waiting of Advent is purposeful. We know why we are waiting and for what we are waiting for. Far beyond the experience of simply being "stuck," this experience has value.

There are two aspects of Advent waiting that are not part of the experience of waiting in line that have great value. One of the reasons that frustrates me when I'm stuck in traffic is that there's nothing to do, except wait. In contrast, there is much to do in Advent waiting. We are recalling the longing of history for the Savior, and in that there is much to ponder. We experience the presence of God in the hopeful anticipation of the people of the Old Testament. We reflect upon the Covenant and hear the inspiring words of the Prophets. If we are simply waiting for Christmas Day, we are missing out on a lot!

The other part of Advent waiting is that it has a goal, a purpose, an end point. In normal waiting, all we want is for the line to start moving. In this holy season we are actively preparing our hearts to joyfully celebrate, again, the wonder of the Incarnation, God becoming Man. At the same time, we allow ourselves to excitedly dream of the day when He will finally come again to take us all home. As the beautiful spiritual proclaims, "Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King!" We are waiting for something wonderful, indeed well worth waiting for!

I will never like being stuck in a traffic jam, but Advent is different. Don't get caught up in just waiting for Christmas day. Take advantage of Advent. This waiting is blessed. If you truly enter into the spirit of this season's anticipation, your Christmas will be even better, and its spirit will last much longer.

"He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, and by Him you were called to fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:8-9)