

Waiting during Advent

My parents had three sons and adopted two more boys. As the years progressed, I remember Frank, my eldest brother, turned 30, I was 15 and I thought, "Wow is he ever old!" When I was 33 my mother, at age 52 died and last Thursday, the 15 year old who thought 30 was old, whose mom died at age 52, turned 65. If you live long enough and remain open to learning, faith development and surprises, with age can come renewed joy over being alive regardless of the hurts, heartache and breaking down of the human body begun at conception.

As I review my life, now that I'm half way through it, I am planning, as you see, on living at least until 130 :), I find myself playing catch up. You see, if you listen carefully, I often preach, "The fool learns in the end what the wise person learned in the beginning!" I'm doing remedial work on catching up on missed opportunities to "grow up" as Miss Joan Rivers preaches. Advent as you well know by now is a time of expectation, patience and waiting, all under the umbrella at least theoretically, of joy. So here I am at 65, "joyfully" waiting for many things and keenly aware that I am still keeping God waiting...aware that God waits and waits and waits never losing patience.

Mostly God waits for us to stop blaming others for the anger we cause for ourselves. Let's be honest, we want others to take responsibility for the failure in our personal lives, in our marriage, in our family and in our business affairs. Scapegoating began when Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. Today who gets the blame for our anger. Our individual anger is always someone else's fault, something caused our anger? Oh to be wise enough to accept we allowed ourselves to become angry by miss identifying what really is the issue. So, in our "wisdom" (ignorance) we cling to the anger, embellish it, feed it, and then childishly respond: by doing something stupid...tell the whole world who is the cause of our misery and remain miserable.

As a result, we keep our spouses, children, parents, colleagues and anyone "privileged" to have to listen to our complaints, as miserable as we are. Through it all...our loving God waits patiently and God will never stop waiting. But our spouses, our children, our friends and business associates are not God. They all reflect God but unlike God, they might just run out of patience depending on just how painful living with us is each day.

There are many ways we can run out of patience: the silent treatment, self medication (over and under the counter), addictions, avoidance, see the lawyer, draw up the papers, serve the papers, separate bedrooms, separation, divorce, hire someone else to raise the children, boarding school...only to name a few. As I wait or as God waits for me once again this Advent, I will ponder, should I keep him waiting or surrender to the wisdom that what I avoid is actually the opportunity to embrace what I'm waiting for, the inner peace no one person or one thing can keep from me, expect me, my anger and my scapegoating.

This Advent I may step up to the plate, forgive myself, take responsibility, get over it, and be much more joyful, the way it was, the way we were, before anger clouded it all. O come O come Emanuel and ransom captive Israel.

Fr. Tom