

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - B  
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Take the time to make the time! Our theme for this advent season!

I love to travel, and although I do most of it these days by flying on Delta Airlines, back when I was a bit younger, I decided to take a trek all by myself across the entire country. So I jumped in my brand new Chevy Cavalier (the car that is some ten years old now) and I drove from Louisiana to California back to South Carolina and then back home. At the end of my trip, I was right around Charleston, and I stopped at a small diner to take a break. I needed some refreshment, a little breakfast, and most importantly COFFEE! I drove through the night, and now it was getting close to dawn. So before I got too sleepy, I just stopped for a while.

So I waited for my breakfast to come. I soon noticed a black guy came into the place. He sat down on a stool up by the lunch counter. Soon, the manager of the dive began to treat the black man with great contempt, and I immediately knew that he was racist. He was rude, insulting, and down-right demeaning toward his guest. I sat in my booth a little ways away and wondered when would be the right time to say something to this guy for his conduct. The black man quickly slurped down his coffee and then fled the diner.

I never got around to saying anything. I paid my bill and then made my way back to my car. And as I was fiddling with the keys, I heard the strangest noise: I heard a rooster crow. Needless to say, the next few hours of my car ride were filled with shame and regret! If only I had done something while I was waiting! If only I had taken the time to make the time!

We spend so much of our lives waiting. As children, we could hardly wait for the holidays. We could hardly wait to grow up. As adults, we're still struck waiting. We wait at the doctor's office. We wait for our flight at the airport. Some people at the end of their lives even wait to die. Sometimes we wait for something to happen. Other times, we wait for stuff to stop happening.

And now we find ourselves in a season of waiting. But waiting for what? It can't be that we're waiting for the birth of Christ. That's already happened! It's not really a time for waiting for the end of the world; nobody knows when that will happen! Might today's Scriptures as we prepare to celebrate this new liturgical year be challenging us to do something while we're waiting – to take the time to make the time!

In our first reading that we heard today from the book of Isaiah, the prophet invites to do something while we're waiting: take the time to transform our pain into hope! The people of Isaiah's time notice bunches of bad things going on around them. They ask questions like "why have you not protected us?" and "why have you allowed things to get so bad?" They acknowledge their pain directly to God, but they don't become fixated on it. Instead, they take the time to move from their initial complaint to an expression of their confidence in God. Our life is awfully similar. Waiting for things to change can be tedious and even discouraging, but if we don't take the time to make the time, we become disheartened.

Paul gives the Corinthians a similar challenge in the second reading today: instead of just waiting, take the time to make the time! We should have no excuses. Just like the Corinthians, we might seem overwhelmed by everything that happens in the world, waiting for things to change on their own. Yet, Paul reminds all of us that we have the gifts and talents that we need to live faithfully in this world. All we have to do is take the time to use them!

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that they won't know the exact time when he will return. Jesus tells them it could be anytime, and because of that they need to be watchful: they need to live every moment as though it could be their last. In other words, they need to take the time NOW to make the time to prepare for the Lord's coming among us. I assume the disciples did what we usually do. They heard Jesus' warning and they figured that if such a thing were to happen, it would be some time in the future. They might not be alive to witness it.

Pay attention to that rooster though. Without any clocks and with the rare sundial, Israelites relied on the rooster crowing to tell time. They usually crow three times – 1130PM, 130AM, and around dawn. Jesus tells them his coming might even happen the second time the rooster crows. And they dismiss what Jesus says. There's only one other episode where the rooster appears – one chapter later – about 48 hours from today's Gospel. A rooster crows at 130AM – a second crowing; Jesus is on trial; and the full truth of Jesus' statement comes crashing down on Peter. That moment was his second coming for Peter, his encounter with the living God. God's promise was a lot closer than he thought.

As we celebrate Advent, we need to take the time to make the time. There are moments in our lives when the fullness of God's kingdom is revealed to us – and we need to be ready, because it might be a lot closer than we think. Sure, this season is a time to wait. But it's also a time to prepare. Lots of things have happened to us over the past year. We've experienced two hurricanes yet again; we've dealt with insurance adjustors and made claims. The economy is in shambles; gas prices have been like a roller-coaster. We've just had the liveliest presidential campaign possible, not to mention our normal, daily routine. And the Lord is still telling us despite our hectic lives, "Be prepared! You never know the hour!"

Where do you need to take the time to make the time in your life? Is it better prayer? Is it waiting on the Lord by improving your relationships? Is it taking better care of yourself?

As we prepare to celebrate this Eucharist, let us take the time to make the time for what we truly need in our life so that when we hear the rooster crow, we won't be filled with shame or regret. We'll be filled with joy because of God's advent in our lives.