

December 6, 2015 Waiting for the Lord Homily:

My brothers and sisters, as a first year college student, I was required to read a book written by a prominent Jewish psychiatrist, Dr. Victor Frankl entitled "Man's Search for Meaning". To this day I have a vivid recollection of reading the first few pages of the book and then putting it down, with no intention of picking it up again. As an eighteen year old, I found the book to be heavy sledding and not particularly interesting! Not surprisingly, sometime later, I was called upon by my teacher to offer my insights on the book. I stammered and then was left speechless. I simply had failed to do my homework. Yes, I was exposed by my teacher as a lazy student!

Years later, I once again picked up the book. And I'm glad I had done so. It's a great read! When the Nazi's took over Germany in the early 1930's, Dr. Frankl was arrested along with other Jews and sent to a concentration camp. In fact, the camp to which he was sent was one of the most notorious of all, Auschwitz. In his book, Frankl describes the sufferings endured by the prisoners in the camp. Surprisingly, one of the worst sufferings was that of waiting... Waiting to learn what happened to loved ones, waiting to learn one's fate, waiting to be executed and waiting to be rescued. The mental anguish was, at times, unbearable.

The terrible sufferings affected the prisoners in different ways. Some lost their faith in God and stopped believing. Others continued to wait and pray. They never lost hope. They never despaired. Amazingly, they persevered! They were long accustomed to waiting as a people of faith.

At the time of John the Baptist, Jews were oppressed by the occupying power, Rome, and suffered from the pain of waiting. Nevertheless, those with a deep faith lived daily in anticipation of the Messiah, the One anointed by God to bring salvation and hope to his people. Some of you may remember viewing the film adaptation of the Broadway musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*. As the story ends, the Jews of the small village of Anatevka are ordered to leave their homeland and move somewhere else. One of the devout Jews, a young man, approaches his rabbi in tears. He asks his teacher a pointed question. "Rabbi, we waited all our lives for the coming of the messiah. Wouldn't now be a good time for him to come?" The rabbi does his best to comfort the young man. "We'll just have to wait for him somewhere else".

Christianity is waiting for the Lord's second coming. We are reminded of this truth each time we pray the Lord's Prayer...we pray "thy kingdom come". During the sacred season of Advent, our focus is on the second coming of the Lord Jesus in power and glory. We recall the old acclamation of faith "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again". We have no reason to be downcast!

Let us be honest in admitting that we do not like to wait. We live in a world where "right now" rules. We prefer "fast food", "Jiffy Lube", "instant coffee" and "speed dial". We try to wait as little as possible. How often do we lose our patience in a "waiting" room? Yet, in truth, we must often wait for a long time to get the things which are most meaningful to us.

Perhaps we can learn a lesson from the cloistered nuns and monks who stand vigil in the middle of the night, anticipating the Lord's coming. They live in joyous expectation of seeing Christ at the end of time.

Our waiting must never be passive, The Baptist exhorts us to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Lk.3:4).

Let us pray! Let us repent of our sins! Let us live the faith... we are called to be witnesses. Let us make straight his paths! (Lk.3:4)

Amen!