



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## **1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent - Year A**

### ***Waiting and wanting***

*Readings: Isaiah 2: 1-5, Ps 121, Romans 13: 11-14 Matthew 24: 37-44*

In 1968 the National Provincial Bank merged with the London, County and Westminster Bank to form what we now know as Nat West. The staid domain of banking was about to undergo a revolutionary change in lifestyle. The previous regime of the customer going, cap in hand, to persuade a disapproving headmasterly manager of the need to offer a secured loan was about to be replaced by an avaricious sales team trying to sell scarcely secured debts to all and sundry. It was the world in which the credit card came to rule and Nat West launched the first serious competitor to the ubiquitous Barclaycard. It was named 'Access' to emphasise the new power and liberty it purported to provide and it was marketed under the slogan, 'TAKES THE WAITING OUT OF WANTING.'

It has always stuck in my mind because, in some ways, 'take the waiting out of wanting' has become the epitaph of the West's consumer capitalism and its obsession with instant gratification. But it also underlines the apparent plausibility of the big fat lie.

What used to derided as the 'never never' (never owned, never finished paying the debt) became the accepted cornerstone of the economy of the

last fifty years. But instant gratification, whether in consumer purchasing or sexual relations, turned out to be anything but gratifying. A child in a sweetshop, given free rein, would pretty soon make itself sick. In consumer society too many of us adults became just big children, appetites without discipline, wanting without waiting.

When I was a child one of the great excitements was to set your mind on something and want it so bad that it hurt and then save up for it. The anticipation was intense and exciting and enjoyable. The realisation of that desire, when it came, was immense and the care of the long desired object correspondingly great. The waiting had done several things. It had tested my desire. Did I really need it or, over a longer term, desire it? Was I prepared to commit myself, at some cost to achieve it? It ensured that when I got it full use would be made of this hard won aim. Waiting was part of the joy and enhanced the final reality. It focussed my desire and purified it. It tested it and then turned simple fickle desire into affixed and ardent longing.

I speak of material things here but the same principles apply to the spiritual. Thus Mother Church gives us the Season of Advent. I love Advent so much that I almost prefer it to the Festival yet it has, for most people, been tragically overwhelmed by the tidal wave of sentimental tripe that masquerades as the modern Christmas. But without a proper Advent, Christmas is a damp squib.

Apart from giving us some of the most beautiful music and carols, Advent invites us to look back at the long history of Man.

Advent asks us to understand our creation and purpose.

Advent reminds us of the experience the Fall.

Advent asks us to meditate long and hard on the certainty of our mortality and the judgement of God.

Advent has us stand alongside generations of the faithful who longed for salvation, liberation and life.

Advent has us listen to the cry of the prophets calling us home.

Advent asks us the question, do we long for Heaven, do we seek salvation?

Advent interrogates our journey, are we set out for the City of Peace, the new Jerusalem?

Advent asks us if we are we ready for the coming of Christ.

We are those who are fortunate enough to know that the Messiah has come yet we stand in solidarity with all those forebears in the Faith who prayed and waited and longed for His coming and His merciful rule. We stand in solidarity because we too await the coming of Christ. We not only look back on our history but we look forward to its consummation in Christ's Second Coming.

As the weeks of this great penitential season unfold so do the themes of intense and excited preparation. With the prophets we preach repentance because we love our fellow man and seek his salvation. In the Scriptures we see the unfolding revelation of God's great rescue mission.

With the Baptist we stand on the sacramental bank of the Jordan calling men back to God, immersing them in the divine life and pointing always and everywhere to the Sacrifice. 'Behold the Lamb of God'.

With Our Lady we open our hearts and our lives to the Word of God and, in loving obedience, present Jesus Christ to the waiting world.

At Advent we remember where we have come from, understand just where we stand now and long for what will be in the mercy and providence of God.

No Advent.....No Christmas. We wait for Him and we want Him.

Advent is the season of longing that stretches our narrow hearts to receive Jesus.

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