

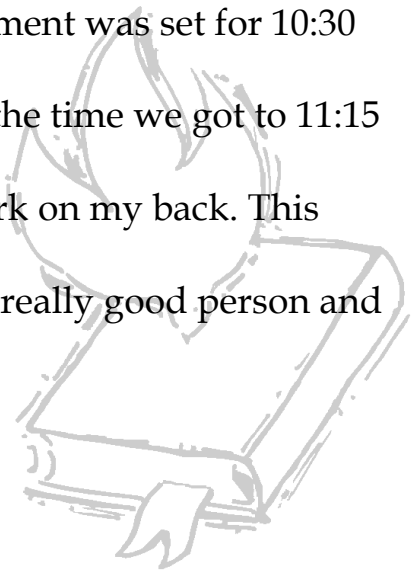
Homily
3rd Sunday of Advent – A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
December 14-15, 2019

Is 35: 1-6, 10
Ps 146: 6-7, 8-9, 9-10
Jas 5: 7-10
Mt 11: 2-11

My inspiration for today's Mass came from my 45-minute wait at the Gyropractor on Friday. I call the guy that works on my back the "Gyropractor" due to the horrible pun I assigned to him, his office used to being located right next to a Greek Fast Food Restaurant in the Minooka Strip Mall where I often frequent. I used to think it would be cool if my doctor bought the fast food place so that I could get my back fixed and then lunch in the same visit. Obviously, my horrible sense of humor has corrupted my life...

Anyhow, I had to wait forty-five minutes on Friday for an appointment that never took place. The appointment was set for 10:30 but I had another appointment set for 11:30. By the time we got to 11:15 a.m., I no longer could wait for the doctor to work on my back. This really didn't bother me, though – the doctor is a really good person and



I usually spend the extra time falling asleep on the vibrating massage chair in his waiting room. Sometimes I wonder if the sleep I get in his office each week is more important than the chiropractic work, although I usually feel much better after Dr. Cissell tends to my back.

I ended up having a similar experience at my heart doctor a week or two ago. My family doctor asked me to take a stress test to make sure that my health was relatively good (if you haven't figured it out, I'm a tad overweight so my family doctor was looking out for my best interests). So I made my appointment for the stress test and, if you have ever done one of these things, I went through the normal ritual for this type of procedure. I was strapped up with all the EKG sensors, I walked on the treadmill, when I became tired I got off the treadmill and laid back on the table and the nurses took pictures of my heart, as is their custom.

In this particular case, when I finished my stress test, the doctor who reviewed the results hurriedly came into my room, scanned over my results and then hastily said, "Not good. Not good pictures at all," and

then left the room. For a second, I was a bit shocked that the doctor said what he did without any explanation. For the next few minutes, I had to wait until he came back to find out what was wrong. In the time I waited, I actually thought I *was* going to have a heart attack.

When the doctor returned to the room to pick up something he left behind, I stopped him in his tracks. I said in my normally loud voice, “Hey doc, what do you mean that the picture was not good?” Without missing a beat, the doctor responded, “Oh, I meant that the picture the nurse took wasn’t good. You’re fine.” Then he rushed out of the room. I came to find out that I was in decent enough health (for now) and that the doctor was mad at the nurse for the bad picture she took, not me.

I’ve come to realize that we do a lot of waiting in life, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad. For a kid, waiting for opening the presents at Christmas seems an interminable amount of time; for me, I have the same problem with rush hour traffic (thank goodness my office is about one foot outside of my living quarters!).

Some people have a difficult time waiting for the things that are trivial, like grocery or fast food lines. Some people have a difficult time waiting for more serious issues in life. Last week, I visited a couple seniors at my parish who are getting up in years. Both individuals were extremely distraught in their respective situations – with their health declining and all of their family and friends gone from earth, they both shared with me their experiences of loneliness and sadness that existed in their lives.

What do you say to people who are waiting to die? My stock response, my most sincere response which I very much believe, is that those in their senior years have the most important responsibility of praying for people like us who are in need of their prayers so that our lives can be drawn closer to the one who created us and the one who wishes to bring us home.

What do you say to a people who have lost all they have and all they are, as was the case in our first reading today? As Isaiah tried to comfort a Northern Kingdom of their horrendous loss at the hands of an

Assyrian army and a warning to the Southern Kingdom of reforming their lives lest they fall in the same dilemma, so his words can easily apply to a people today that are more devoted to the things of earth than the things of heaven.

Today's gospel reminds us of a Chosen People who have been waiting for a Messiah to return, a political figure who would restore the land once lost some six centuries earlier. What John the Baptist professed instead was a different type of Messiah, one who would restore God's covenant with us in a spiritual way, in a more permanent way. And when this Messiah came, when this Messiah had a disciple report to John the Baptist that the prophecy of the Old Testament had been fulfilled, we were taught about John's wonderful role as prophet and teacher of his age but we were taught about a Messiah who infinitely was more important than John.

The problem with waiting for Christmas is the same problem we experience at the fast food line, in rush hour traffic or even for the kids in the month of December – we are so much of a rush to get to the end of

the story that we do not prepare sufficiently for that which we seek. We are taught in the faith that the lesson of waiting often corresponds with the lesson of preparing ourselves for that which is to come.

How often when we are in the fast food line or in rush hour traffic do we actually use that time for something constructive? How often in the world of faith do we use the time of Advent for praying and dedicating our lives to others in the same way that the Christ-child dedicated his life to us? My mother used to teach me about the value of a rosary in the grocery line or in the car, which was a beautiful way of taking those extra minutes God has given us to pray for souls who are looking for our help. Our Church teaches us that Advent is a time for confession, for prayer and for learning about the message of hope given to us by the Lord.

In Advent we get so caught up in the end game that we spend no time spiritually preparing ourselves for what we receive. And if we do that, Christmas can seem empty to us, like a good grade in class that was achieved without any work or a sporting award given to someone

who cut corners in their preparation but truly not worthy of what was given.

Today's feast of *Gaudete Sunday* is an opportunity to recognize that waiting provides the benefit of preparing and that the time given to us by God is a time for reformation and reconciliation. I often think to myself that God gives me these extra days on earth to make right those things that I may have done wrong or could have done better. Possibly this is a time to realize that if we have faith, hope and Christian charity as the foundation of what we do, then the true gift of this Advent and Christmas Season is found in the way we invest ourselves for the sake of the poor, the downtrodden and those who cannot take care of themselves.

Let us realize that it is through this faith in God that we realize how much faith God has in us to reform our lives. Let us do so this Advent Season in the way we take this time of waiting to prepare ourselves well for what is yet to come. Let us teach our children well this lesson of faith

and let us share this lesson of charity with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.