

When I was Pastor, one of my rituals after Communion was to go down to the congregation with a hand-held microphone and invite people to speak. It became a time to congratulate people on their birthdays or anniversaries or to pray for someone in need. On this particular Sunday, we baptized four babies.

One of the children that was baptized was Jack's brother. Now Jack was about three years old and went to church every Sunday with his parents and so he sort of knew that this service was going much longer than he was used to. Jack got impatient and was complaining to his father in the front row about wanting to leave. Jack's father said to him, "Jack, we are going to leaving in a minute."

After Communion, I took the hand-held mic and began to walk down the center aisle, just then Jack got out of his seat, walked to the center aisle, he put up one finger and said, "Father, you got one more minute!!" kids say the darndest things.

Jesus said to His disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: "Watch!"

One experience we all have had: "We have all had to wait and watch for something to arrive." What do you do when you are waiting, are you patient or do you get anxious, or are you a little of both?

Most of us can't wait for this pandemic to be over!! We look for signs of hope that a vaccine will be distributed or a medicine will be developed or that the virus will run its course. For the past eight months we have all been watching and waiting. How have you found yourself reacting and responding to this time of anticipation?

How are you going to react and respond to this Advent period of anticipation? We wait in anticipation to celebrate Christ's birth; we expectantly wait and watch for Christ to come again: we wait for our hearts to open to receive Christ more deeply in our lives. During Advent, this period of anticipation for Christ, how will we prepare ourselves for His arrival?

Thirty years ago, I learned a very valuable Advent lesson. I was asked to drive Bishop Broderick to a Confirmation at the church in St. Johnsville. I had never been to that village and I had never met the Bishop.

I picked up the Bishop from the train station in Albany but the bumper to bumper traffic in the city, delayed our drive. Once on the thruway, I decided to make up for the delay. Of course, you know what happen, I was pulled over by a State Trooper for speeding. After explaining to the Officer that I was running late for a Confirmation, he told me "Father, slow down, you are not going to be late because the Confirmation will not start until the Bishop there!!

Once I arrived at my exit, I quickly asked the toll collector for directions to the Church, and he politely instructed me to drive to the next red light and take a right. I was so nervous that I scurried to the light and turned left; as you can imagine, I was driving through the country side with no signs of a village or a Church.

I finally pulled over to a farm house, knocked on the door and with a panic voice, and a frantic posture, I again asked for directions to the church. The farmer said, "Go to the next intersection and take a right, before he could finish, I was already out the door and into my car. I took a right the intersection and after driving a mile, I was confronted by another intersection where I had to go either right or left and I took a right and I should have turned left. Again, I had to stop for directions and we finally arrived at the Church at 7:50 for a 7:30 Confirmation. The Bishop calmly told the congregation that we were delayed because of traffic in Albany and he saved me the embarrassment of telling about his drive through the country side.

Throughout my drive to the Church, I spent my time being hurried, worried; Bishop Broderick on the other hand never lost his calm, peaceful demeanor.

Reflecting back, I realize that this journey from Albany to St. Johnsville would have been a completely difference if it had not rushed and scurried. Because I was in such a hurry, I did not clearly listen to the State Trooper who told me to slow down, If I wasn't in such a rushed state, I would have heard clearly to the toll collector and I would have patiently listened to all of the farmers instructions.

Hurrying and worrying were obstacles on my journey to the Church but they can also prevent us from preparing ourselves during our Advent season. Advent invites us to slow down, be in the present moment, listen, listen, listen and be attentive to what is happening around us.

Jesus would have never lived the pace of life which we are living, He would live at a much more deliberate, attentive manner. The Lord always lived in the present moment. When Jesus begins His public ministry; Does He immediately rush to the Temple and preach; does He run to the Leper colony and cleanse the Lepers; or hurry to the Synagogue and heal the blind man? Jesus doesn't begin His ministry by healing, or teaching, or cleansing but goes off into the desert to quiet Himself in prayer. Jesus understood how important it was to quiet down, to listen, to live life in a more deliberate manner.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel, "Be watchful. Be Alert." Its hard to be watchful and alert when we are rushing through life. The Bible tell us, "Be still and know that I am God."

Can you think of some ways this week which will help you to slow down, to listen, to quiet your soul? Maybe take a quiet walk or sit down and read an uplifting book.

Let us prayer: please pray after me: Lord Jesus, you lived a deliberate attentive manner, you gave everything and every person you saw your full attention. Help me to slow down, to quiet down and prepare my heart for your coming. Amen and Amen.