

One of my favorite psalms is Ps. 27- it contains an expression that I think about especially during advent: "Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord!" This is a mantra for me, a breathe it in, breathe it out prayer that I use to hear God speak to me. These words speak to me in whatever circumstance I find myself.

Our time is a time of waiting, waiting for the breaking in of eternity. All time runs forward. All time, both history and in personal life, is expectation. Time itself is waiting, waiting not for another time, but for that which is eternal. And so I say to myself, and to you: "Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord!" Advent- a time of patient expectation. A time when, in the words of today's Gospel, you and I should stand erect and raise our heads because our redemption is at hand. Let's do it, for a brief moment, in solidarity with all the Old Testament folks who were waiting for the promised messiah which means that you and I are not yet free. And so we beg for that ransom; we yearn for that freedom. Let your soul stretch Godward- "To you, O Lord, I lift my soul." (Ps. 25)

What does Advent mean for us at this moment. Are we psychologically able to disconnect momentarily from whatever it is that preoccupies us, to disengage from the fast-paced routine of responsibility at home and at work? Can we climb outside our skin for an isolated moment of expectation, of the thrilling reality, that our redemption is at hand? Advent asks us to try! Advent asks us to acknowledge that there is so much more to the weeks ahead than shopping and wrapping, decorating and parties. Advent asks us to use our eyes of faith to see through these weeks quite literally to what is of true and lasting significance, namely, that you and I are part of a people of God that did indeed "stand erect" and did indeed "raise heads" to receive a redemption that was then and is now "at hand."

This is exciting...our redemption is at hand! Our restlessness within us allows us to say with St. Augustine, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." I believe that we might find ourselves helped by less well-known words of Augustine: "Late have I loved you...For behold you were within me, and I outside...You were with me, and I was not with you. You called and cried to me to break open my deafness and you sent forth your beams and you shone upon me, and I drew in my breath and do now pant for you. I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I have burned for your peace." You and I are invited to "Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord!"