

Father Brad Neely
1st Sunday in Advent, Cycle B, Nov 27,
2011
Sts Peter and Paul – Holy Trinity
Is 63f; 1Cor1: 3-9; Mk 13: 33-37

In this first Sunday of Advent,
we know that the word Advent
derives from the Latin *adventus*,
which means, “coming.”
The universal Church, then,
enters a time of *vigilant waiting*.
The first part of Advent---
of this waiting---
is dedicated to the contemplation
and preparation
for the *second coming* of Christ---
that time when the world
will be swept up into the heavenly kingdom,
and those who have come welcomed Christ
into their lives
will see Him as He is.

The 2nd part of Advent reflects
a waiting in joyful anticipation
of Christ’s *first coming*,
leading us directly
to the stable in Bethlehem,
when God, who has taken flesh
in the womb of Mary,
is born---the man, Jesus.

We can say that to wait---
to anticipate---
is done within the context
of persistence, of perseverance.
Something that ties in here
comes from this past Wednesday’s
weekday Gospel from
the 21st chapter of Luke.
Jesus tells the crowds,
“*By your perseverance*
you will secure your lives.”
We could consider **perseverance**
as the filling in the middle
of Christ’s 1st and 2nd coming.

Perseverance doesn’t sound
all that fun and glittery,
however, it IS a holy endeavor.
Persisting in a life of faith
is something to seriously contemplate
in our modern world.
I am not entirely sure if perseverance
it is still something
that our culture values.

By its very nature,
it is obviously the opposite
of some of our culture’s
expectations of *instant gratification*.
But it is, however, very important
to pay attention to the Lukan verse,
“*by your perseverance*
you will secure your lives,”
precisely because **Christ says it**.

The prophet Isaiah,
in our first reading today
indirectly acknowledges
Israel’s *perseverance* in faith,
while more directly addressing
her long history of flip-flopping
in continuity of faithfulness.
There is a definite pattern
of Israel following God,
then veering off the rails,
and coming back again.
As with all the true prophets
of the Old Testament,
Isaiah calls his fellow Israelites
to return to the proper fold of God.

Isaiah acknowledges, *before God*,
that their “*guilt carries [them] away*
like the wind. You, [God],
have hidden your face from us
and have delivered us up to our guilt.”
Isaiah envisions, with God:
“*Would that you might meet us*
doing right, that we were mindful
of you in our ways!”

No ear has ever heard,
no eye ever seen,
any God but you
doing such deeds for those
who **wait** for him.
[ooh!----**waiting** suggests **persevering!**]
Isaiah continues, “O LORD,
you are our father;
we are the clay and you the potter:
we are all the work of your hands.”

Isaiah call to the nation of Israel,
is certainly a call that is still valid today.
Considering the potter and the clay,
why *don't* we place ourselves
in the hands of the One we wait for?
To give ourselves
to be formed by the hand of God,
such as potter and clay,
is the first step of perseverance.
But it is not perseverance in vain.
It is, rather, the determination
to live each day to day with:
*prayerful patience,
*joyful anticipation, *and*
*committed hope.
It is the determination
to persevere in our lives of faith
so that those who persevere,
as Christ says,
will **be secure** in what
is promised them by God.

That promise, of course,
is nothing less than
God becoming flesh,
dying,
and the risen Christ
coming again at the end of time,
to sweep those who persevere in faith
into everlasting divine life.
Let us **watch**,
and **persevere**,
so that we are ready when Christ comes,
and are counted among those faithful.