

Sunday 7th August 2022

My dear brothers and Sisters, I hope you are well and are enjoying this warm weather? I have been wondering if you have noticed at every mass, following the Lord's Prayer, the priest adds a prayer that says that "we wait in joyful hope." Day after day, year after year, century after century, millennium after millennium we wait for. — for what? For whom? Is there really a saviour, a God, to come after all? With this in mind, let us reflect briefly on:

WAITING IN HOPE!!

A young man once said to me, "Father Nicholas, are you Christians not deluding yourselves? Are your church members not like the tramps in Beckett's play waiting for Godot, pathetic characters in an absurd world waiting and waiting for no reason for someone who will never come?"

One of the ways to deal with the problem of waiting is to forget that we are waiting at all. Like the servant in the parable, we say to ourselves, "My Master is taking his time about coming." We occupy ourselves with all sorts of distractions of the moment, many of them truly worthwhile, but distractions none the less. We serve the world, we worship, we study. We organise an entire church.

But today's gospel reminds us that regardless of whatever else we may do in the interim, we are waiting. The servant may have a dance party while awaiting the master's return, but they still keep an eye out for that return.

So, where is he? Where is the Saviour for whom we "wait in joyful hope" or bored resignation or inattentive activity? We may say that the Lord comes to us in various ways throughout our lives. We say that we encounter him in prayer or that we see him in our neighbour; we hear him speak in scripture; we share his life in the Eucharist — provided, that is, that we have the faith to either hear or see him at such times. But are we deluding ourselves, taking refuge from the possibility that he may never come by making believe he comes all the time?

Momentary, faith dependent comings are not the coming of which Jesus spoke. They are not the coming for which we wait. What we await is a different sort of coming, an absolutely unambiguous coming that means a perpetual presence with us. And that is yet to happen. Or, so it seems. What is waiting? What do we do when we wait for someone to come to us or contact us? If it is someone we are anxious to meet, we try to kill time, but without much success. We pick up a book or magazine, but keep looking at the door, a window, or the telephone. Our eyes move across the page, but our mouths could never tell what we "read" because our minds were not in the reading. We turn on the TV and Stare blankly at the screen.

In some ways, when we await someone, he or she is already present because the expectation of the coming is shaping our activities, our feelings and our attitudes. Whether we wait in hope or in dread, the thing or person or event we await has become a part of our life. In fact, we pay more attention to the person whom we await than we do to someone who is actually with us. The absent person we wait for becomes more real than the present person.

When we wait for Christ, he shapes us. If we really wait in expectation, he becomes more real to us than the "reality" we see around us. Perhaps that is what it means to wait in joyful hope for the coming of the Lord. In some sense, while we wait for him, he is with us. He is part of the waiting. It is his presence with us as we wait that makes our Christian wait one of joyful hope. In our Baptism, in prayer, in the Eucharist, in the community that gathers and waits in his name, he is with us. Waiting is a key part of Christian vocation.

And finally, we must remember that when we "wait in joyful hope" there is a real presence of the Lord for us. If we lose the sense of expectation, lose the urge to cry out, "Come Lord Jesus!" our Faith will become a mere matter of ceremonies, words and gestures. It will become absurd, and Jesus will sooner or later become for us no more real than Godot.

My dear brothers and Sisters, as I wish you peace of mind and body, let us wait with and for the Lord, and May the intercession of our Blessed mother Mary protect you and your families, Amen.

Yours Affectionately,
Father Nicholas Nwanzi.