

## Pastor's corner - December 4, 2011 - Active Watching and Waiting

Last week the message from Jesus in the Gospel of Mark 13: 33-37 was clear and to the point: **“Stay awake!” The beginning of Advent reminded us to be ready, to wait and to watch in prayer for the re-birth of God in Jesus among us and within us.** Yet, we live in a world that is often impatient and apathetic in its waiting for God. The Scripture readings tried to tell us that watching, active waiting and praying are essential in our lives. Paul assured us in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading (I Corinthians 1: 3-9) that this was possible because of the gifts given to us: “You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait.”

The **Cherokee** people have an ancient saga which relates this ability to remain watchful, alert and awake to the greenness of nature in the midst of barrenness. William Bausch tells us this saga in his book, A World of Stories:

- When the plants and trees were first created, the **Great Mystery** gave a gift to each species, but set up a contest to determine which gift would be most useful to whom. “I want you to stay awake and keep watch over the earth for seven nights,” said the Great Mystery. The young trees and plants were so excited to be entrusted with such an important job that they did not find it difficult to stay awake the first night. However, the second night was not so easy and a little while before dawn, a few fell asleep. On the third night, the trees and plants whispered among themselves in the wind to keep from nodding off, but the challenge was too much for some of them. On the fourth night, even more fell asleep. By the time the seventh night came, only the cedar, the pine, the spruce, the fir, the laurel and the holly were still awake. “What wonderful endurance you have,” exclaimed the Great Mystery. “You shall be given the gift of remaining green forever. **You will be the guardians of the forest. Even in the seeming dead of winter, your brother and sister creatures will find life and shelter in the protection of your branches.**” Ever since that time, all the other trees and plants lose their leaves and sleep all winter while the evergreens stay awake. -

Our Advent wreath with its everlasting green circle reminds us that we need to remain watchful, alert and awake by always being aware of our life-giving connection to divine realities, even when other forces in our world tempt us in other directions. **Those other forces lead us to barrenness while active waiting, watching and remaining “green” will lead us to that wonderful endurance which brings hope, peace, joy and love.** We have been given the necessary gifts by the “Great Mystery” and through the gift of the Spirit we can remain connected to God in our lives. As Isaiah reminded us last week in Isaiah 64:8: “Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.” God in Jesus, the Redeemer, comes to be re-born in our hearts to give us the necessary endurance so that we might be “the guardians of the forest.”

In this season of consumption we are kind of told that buying is almost a “religious” act “saving” our economy and our world! Well, deep down in our hearts we know that those kind of worldly forces will not save us and will ultimately lead us to barrenness. That is when we need to remember that the potter did not shape us in that way. The Redeemer brings us the everlasting gifts of hope, peace, joy and love which cannot be bought, but are pure gifts. We are stewards of those gifts given to us in creation, in the goods of the earth, in the blessings of life; they are there for us to share. “Your brother and sister creatures will find life and shelter in the protection of your branches.” **The Spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of giving is more in keeping with the Gospel when it is from “the have to the have-not” than from “the have to the have-more.”**

Shalom,

*Je Rolf, OP*