1 Homily for the First Sunday of Advent Year A

27 November 2016

Is 2:1-5; Rom 13:11-14; Mt 24:37-44

Carlo Carretto, the renowned spiritual writer, spent many years living alone as a hermit in the Sahara desert. He wrote a number of books from that place of solitude, including one entitled, “Letters from the Desert.” In that book, he has a message for those of us who live busy lives in the world. He asks the question from his readership: “What is God trying to say to us in our busy lives?” He suggests this reply: “Be patient! Learn to wait—for each other, for love, for happiness, for your wife, husband, son, daughter, father and mother, learn to wait for God!”

As we begin the season of advent, a time for the preparation for Christmas, we are invited to be a community of waiting. Christian understanding of waiting means living that “now” in our lives. It anchors the mind securely in the present, so it does not float away into the past and future with their memories, regrets, fears, and hopes. “Tomorrow is tomorrow. Future cares have future cures, and we must mind today,” said [Sophocles](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1002.Sophocles). But, this is exactly what the modern man and woman is incapable of living and doing. Our minds are constantly engaged in tomorrow and preoccupied with the future. It is just one obsession with the future. How to save for a rainy day, to get married, to buy a home, to send the children to college, to plan out my superannuation and to retire in comfort? When we are constantly future oriented, anxieties, worries, fears and apprehensions easily creep into our lives and overwhelm us. That is why Marcus Aurelius in his Meditation wrote: “Do every act of your life as though it were the very last act of your life.”

It is against this dreading futuristic attitude, Jesus warns us today. People of that world live entirely for the present. Jesus chides us today for worrying about tomorrow, and what we will eat, drink, or wear ([Mt 6:25-34](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/bible/matthew/6:25)). He teaches us to ask God only for today’s bread and not a week’s supply. Unnecessary fretting about the future can take our focus and eyes away from the Lord. Lord Buddha said, “Do not dwell in the past, and do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment.” If we are waiting for the Lord, we need to train ourselves to remain in the present, open, quiet, and alert, contemplating the present event. This is what Jesus meant when he said “Stay awake!” not to be carried away by future securities. Let us ground ourselves profoundly in the present, in that “Christ Moment” where we begin to realize the presence of Christ encompassing everything.