

1 Advent 2020  
29 November 2020  
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*{Chris will be offering a longer reflection after Communion today, so I just wanted to offer a thought to help us step into this Advent time.}*

Since March when everything began to shut down, the one thing that I started to do was to read more. I am normally one book at a time kind of reader, but now I have about seven books going, I am a slow reader, so any one of these books will be done in the next five years. One book and actually a movie as well, directed me to this quote that has been playing on my mind ever since reading it and I am taking this quote into Advent with me...

*"...for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."*

This was written by George Eliot... the pen name of a popular author in the 1800's. Her real name being Mary Ann Evans. That quote captures Advent for me this year.

Truth be told, we have already done Advent this year. We were forced to, and what we were forced to do should not have upset us as Catholics, because we are called to do this kind of thing every year, at least those who take Advent seriously.

Around March we were all told to shut down and stay at home. We were told... wait, watch, be alert ... especially for everyone's safety and well-being as we were trying to figure out this virus. So that meant people had to stay home, face each other, eat together, talk with each other. Some had to go it alone, not be with others. There was a deep sense of isolation, disconnection even and the reaction to this was sometimes mind boggling... some hoarded toilet paper, and others had to come face to face with silence and quiet and it was threatening. Some, they filled that space up with making bread and for some, like my nephew Jacob, he learned the guitar, and some, sad to say, acquainted and reacquainted themselves with new and old demons. But that time period, should have been familiar to all of us. It is what the Church asks us to do every year in the Advent Season. But in previous years, how many actually took Advent seriously? The temptation is, let's bypass this time, and jump on Christmas.

While there were many dimensions to the shutdown, the spiritual dimension to it I think was very much what Advent calls us to do each year:

Sit down with yourself,  
take stock of your life,  
be with yourself in quiet, stillness, silence, and solitude.  
Take time to relish the light and even find solace in the early darkened days.  
Be alone... well, be with "Jesus alone."

And for those who cannot sit still for very long, there is an active dimension to Advent as well. But it's not loud action, it's not bombastic or forceful, it's not about telling people what they should be doing. As Mary Ann Evans so eloquently points out... Advent calls for anonymous things to be done to better the lives of others. Anonymously done, so we do not swell up with pride or look for that pat on the back. And most of all Advent is about this: hide yourself in Christ. It is only there that we will ever know who we truly are.

Perhaps the first Advent we had this year, last March and April and into May, June, and July...if we had done all this, remembered all this, perhaps there wouldn't have been an unprecedented need for toilet paper.

But now we have a second chance, another chance at this time. To put into action the wisdom of Mary Ann Evans, as she captured this season so well ...

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