

In the Meantime

There was a post on Facebook commemorating a person who recently died. It read simply: “Born 1932. Died 2017. In between, amazing human being.” It was a very simple way to sum up the life of the person. The sentiment it represents is echoed to some extent in the exhortation in the Second Letter of Peter, one of the readings for the Second Sunday of Advent. Peter writes, “ ... what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God!”

Peter reflects the early church’s belief that the end time was not far off, and that believers should be faithful at every moment, ready to welcome the Lord in his second coming at any time. He suggests that we may indeed have a part in bringing about the second coming by living lives of holiness, as he writes, “ ... he shows you generous patience, since he wants none to perish but all to come to repentance.” In other words, God is willing to wait until we are ready to accept and love Him as He has already accepted and loved us.

Advent is considered a time of waiting for the Lord to appear in our lives. In this view, it is we who do the waiting. But if we reflect carefully on these words of Peter, perhaps we should turn that around and reflect on the possibility that it is God who is waiting for us.

In reality, there is no waiting for God, for God has already given us the gift of his son Jesus, who lived among us, died at our hands and rose again to reveal for us the promise of eternal life. This is the core belief of Christians. In a sense, the ball is now in our court to plumb the depths of that mystery; to understand what difference it can make in our lives. God is waiting for us.

If we take this view, Advent becomes a time for us to reflect more deeply on the shape of our “in between” time.

How does the conduct of our health ministry reflect God’s reign to those we serve beyond the day-to-day business concerns we must address?

What difference does it make to our manner of conducting the business of health care when we think of our work as hastening God’s reign?

More personally, if I am willing to accept that God is waiting for me, how does that change the priorities of my “in between” time here and now?